Errour Non-pluſt,

OR,

Dr. STILLINGFLEET Shown to be *The Man of* NO PRINCIPLES.

WITH

An ESSAY how Diſcourſes concerning Catholick Grounds bear the Higheſt Evidence.

[*by John Sergeant*]

Multum neceſſe eſt ut Prophetica & Apoſtolica Interpretationis Linea *ſecundum Eccleſiaſtici & Catholici Senſus* Normam *dirigatur.* Vinc. Lir. cap. 2.

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PREFACE
TO THE
Learned of this Nation.

IS *it possible then that* Errour *can admit* Principles ? *Or* (*which is equivalent*) *that* Truth *cannot admit* any, *but must be quite destitute of such firm Supports? Or is it even possible that Falshood dare so much as* pretend *to such Evident Grounds, and offer to* make good *her Pretence, and not sink in deepest Disgrace for laying Claim to a thing to which it must needs be Evident she has not the least Shadow of a Title? Certainly, whoever considers attentively that* Principles *are* (*properly speaking*) First Truths, *either Absolutely, or with Restriction to such a matter, and withall that* these *must be most perfectly* Self-evident, *and* other *Principles confining upon the former, must needs partake a very high degree of Conspicuousnes by their near approach to those great* Luminary Truths, *will, upon the joyning these two Considerations, easily conclude such a Pretence* Unmaintainable, *if*

things

things be rightly ſtated and propos'd. Beſides, ſince all True Judgments *are built on the Things being* ſuch *as we* judg'd it to be, *and what's* True *is* Impoſſible to be Falſe, *it muſt needs follow that* (*all Circumſtances taken in*) *it was* Impoſſible, *and ſo, a* Contradiction, *the Thing, at what time we fram'd that* right Judgment *of it, ſhould have been* otherwiſe then it was. *A* Contradiction *I ſay; for that which is in the* Thing *or Object an* Impoſſibility, *is a* Contradiction *in our* Minds *inform'd by that* Object. *Whence reſults this Great and Clear Truth, that* Every Error neceſſarily involves a Contradiction, and every Truth a Firſt Principle; *and that, though not in* Formality of Expreſſion, *yet in* Reality of Senſe *they are both of them* ſuch.

And is it poſſible that theſe Beſt Evidences *now ſpoken of ſhould be held* Obſcure *or* Falſe; *or that* Contradictions (*their Oppoſites*) *which Principle all Falſhoods, ſhould gain the repute of* Cleareſt Truths? *Surely, there muſt needs be a ſtrange* perverſion *of Nature ſomewhere, when ſuch* Monſters *in Rationality can obtain the Eſteem of being* Legitimate *Productions of* Reaſon: *And, this muſt be either in the mindes of the* Perſons to be inform'd, *who are violently ſway'd by* Paſſion *or* Intereſt *to thoſe of their own Party, ſo as not to conſider at all* what Evidence *there is in what they ſay, but*

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to accept themselves and cry up to others any piece of Empty Rhetorick, Plausible Talk, or pretty Irony for solid Conviction: or else in the Discoursers who are to inform those Readers; and the Chief Engin with which they work upon their want of Skill is to talk indeed of Principles, because 'tis the highest Credit that can be to be thought to have such Invincible Grounds: But they never look into the Nature of Principles and thence make out to their Readers what kind of Sayings those must be which can deserve that Excellent Name, lest they should disgrace themselves and shame their Cause; while the whole strength of their Discourse is built on this, that those Propositions they rely on are indeed Right Principles; and yet, when look't into, are no more like what they are pretended to be then so many old Wives Tales.

It seems then to me both most Conducive to the Clearing of Truth, as also the most Candid and Equal way of proceeding to look first into the Nature of Principles, and by laying it open to determin thence what Propositions deserve that name, what not. For, if I rightly perform this, and it appear thence that Dr. St. has indeed product such Grounds as have in them the true Nature of Principles and proceeded upon them, all his Discourse thus built, must necessarily be Convictive, and the Result of it a Certain Truth. But, in

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caſe he has not *produc't any* ſuch, *his whole Diſcourſe is convinc't to be meer* Trifling *and* Folly.

A Principle *then, taken as diſtinguiſh't from other Propoſitions or Sayings, involves two Perfections in it's notion*: Evidence *and* Influence *upon ſome* other *Truths that partake their Evidence from It. For, were it never ſo Evident in* it ſelf, *yet, if it* deriv'd *none of that Evidence to* another, *nor had Relation to any thing beſides it ſelf, it might be indeed in that caſe a* Great Truth, *but it would no more be* a Principle, *then that can be ſaid to be a* Beginning *which has neither* Middle *nor* End, *nor any thing* following *it. Evidence is twofold*, Self-Evidence *and* Evidence *by way of* Proof. *The former belongs to* Firſt Principles *as hath been at large prov'd in* Reaſon againſt Raillery, *Diſc.* 2. *&* 3*d. Evidence by* Proof, *belongs to* Subordinate *Principles, which are* Concluſions *in reſpect of thoſe above them, and yet themſelves Influential to prove* other *things. And the* Evidence *of theſe muſt be reſolvable finally into* Self-evident *ones, otherwiſe it would follow that all* Proof *muſt proceed higher and higher* in Infinitum, *and ſo* nothing *could ever be prov'd at all. Now* other *kindes of Evidence beſides theſe* two (*ſpeaking of* Speculative *Evidence*) *are unimaginable, ſince 'tis moſt manifeſt, that what is neither* Self-Evident *nor*

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made-Evident *is not Evident at all.*

Hence is ſeen, that 'tis Impoſſible, the nature of Principles once rightly underſtood, Errour (on whoſe ſide ſoever it be) ſhould maintain it's Pretence *to* Principles; *Since 'tis Impoſſible that any thing ſhould either be* Self-Evident *or* Made-Evident *which is not a* Real Truth; *as alſo* Impoſſible *that what's Evident* any *way (or, which is all one, a* Truth) *ſhould patronize or abett* Errour. *This way then of managing Controverſies is perfectly Deciſive; For which reaſon I have frequently preſt his Party to it in my* Letter to my Anſwerer *and other places, and have been ſeconded therein by the Learned and worthy Author of* Proteſtancy without Principles; *but none was ever found ſo hardy to attempt it, till this* man of Mettle, *hoping his* tinkling expreſſion *and* gingling wit *would baffle even Truth it ſelf, took the* Confidence *to talk of what he never underſtood. However he is to be thank't by us both and acknowledg'd a Generous Adverſary, that, laying aſide at preſent thoſe frivolous* Inconcluſive *ways of quoting* Authorities *which himſelf holds* may deceive *us in all they ſay, as alſo thoſe Inſignificant Devices of* pretty Jeſts *and other* Rhetorical Dexterities, *he accepts our Challenge to ſuch a manner of Fight, as muſt neceſſarily be* Fatal *to one ſide and* Victorious *to the other. Had he ſtated alſo the nature of* Principles *exactly, and ſhown* his *to be ſuch, how* formi-

dable *a* Goliah *had he appear'd, and how terrible a man of his hands? whereas now, if it comes to be discover'd that what he call'd a* Sword, *or a* Canon, *is indeed but a Bul-rush, or Pot-gun (a Pygmy's proper weapons,) that is, if it be prov'd that those things he bragg'd of and rely'd on as* Principles, *are in Reality but so many* Paradoxes *or* Impertinences, *I hope we may surcease our Fears, and turn them into a more pleasant humour.*

Though the Prognostick be very obvious what he can *do in this case, yet who knows but for once he may* work *an* Impossibility, *who (as will appear in the ensuing Treatise) has told us so many* Contradictions. *In the mean time, if he thinks fit to attempt any Reply, 'tis Evident from the former Discourse what he is to do, unless he will strangely* Prevaricate *from his* Duty; *viz. either to disallow my settling here the nature of Principles, and state them* better, *that is either to* deny *that they are to have any* Evidence *or* Influence *at all; or else, if he* allows *it, to make out that his pretended Principles have* those Qualifications; *which is best done by resolving them into* First Principles *and* connecting *them* distinctly *with their respective* Consequences. *And let him remember that, till he does this, he neither defends Himself against my present Answer, nor gives a* home *Reply to* Protestancy without Principles (*whatever gay things or*

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things he ſayes to particular paſſages in it) *ſince himſelf acknowledges theſe Principles of his were intended an* Anſwer *to that Book, and out of the nature of both Treatiſes they appear to be the* proper *Return to it.*

I have no occaſion, nor is it my intent here to write againſt the Church of England *or any of her Legitimate Sons: rather I muſt declare that, in caſe they all hold as M.* Thorndike (*a Man of Eminent Learning & Eſteem amongſt them*) *declares himſelf to do* (Juſt weights, p. 159.) *that* the Scripture interpreted by the perpetual Practice of God's Church is the Ground of Faith, *which implies, that* Practical *Tradition is that which gives them Chriſts Senſe or Faith, and ſo is their Rule I muſt heartily applaud their joyning with Catholicks in the main Point of all, and which ſettled is apt to unite us in all the reſt. What I impugn then here is a peſtilent Tenet, deſtructive to all* Epiſcopacy, *and the very Eſſence of* Church; *making Church-Governors* Uſeleſs *in their main Duty of* Teaching Faith *to their* Flock, *and* Lame *in that of* Government: *For, if every private man is to rely on his* own *Interpretation, he ought neither* believe *nor* obey *the Church when the contrary ſeems to his Fancy to be grounded in Scripture; and, if that man do but* alledge *he judges it clear in Scripture, and conſequently that the Church is corrupt and errs: I ſee not with what*

Justice, according to these Principles, the Church can either excommunicate him or bind him to his Duty.

I expect Dr. St. *will object, that I deny divers of his Principles which some of ours have granted; for his Friend* Dr. T. *and he abound in such sleight Topicks; To which, though I could answer, that* unusquisque in sensu suo abundat *in productions of Human Reason, yet I need only alledge* Dr. St's *ambi-dextrous and ambiguous way of contriving his Principles to look so with different faces that even the* same *man may sometimes apprehend them to mean* thus, *sometimes* otherwise. *Besides, all his Confuters aym not at one End:* Mr. E. W. *intending only to shew they conclude not the Point they pretend, and which is superscribed to them:* Mr. N. O. *to shew their Destructiveness to Government; while I take for* my *task to discover their Oppositness to all Logick; True Learning, and Common Rationality, and that there is nothing at all in him of what was pretended, neither Principles, Consequences, Connexion, Conclusions, Reduction, Influence nor End: Nor must he think that everything that is* granted *by any for dispute sake is allowed for good by the Respondent; 'tis frequent to expres we* grant *things which we only* pass *as nothing to the main Point which is to be concluded; nor can* Dr. St. *pretend with any reason that others have yeelded them*

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to be Principles whereas I deny it: The Authour of Reason and Religion, *p.*650. *has pithily declared his Opinion of them and their true merit, in these words:*——Whether the fore-mentioned Principles be True, False, Controverted, or Obscure, no Verity peculiar to Protestants can be deduc't from them,——*which expresses their want of* Clear Evidence, *and so quite degrades them from the Dignity of Principles.*

If any think the Title prefixt to this Book forestals immodestly the Readers Judgment; my Reply usust be, that I hope for Readers of more Prudence *then to receive* Prejudice *from so* easie *an Occasion. A* Counterfeit Modesty *sprung from* Sceptical *Despair or Disregard of Truth will naturally dislike such Expressions; but those who heartily* hold *there is such a thing as* Truth *and intirely* love *It, will esteem the* open *avowing her* compleat victoriousness *both* Fitting *and* Necessary: *and that she conquers* at present, *I have all the* best *Maxims of* Rational Nature *engag'd for my Security.*

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FIRST EXAMEN

CONCERNING

Dr. *Stillingfleet's* Deſign in this Diſcourſe, as expreſt in his TITLE.

1. IN the firſt place, the *Title* ſuperſcribed to this Diſcourſe, and ſignifying to us the *Nature* and *Deſign* of it, is to be well weighed; that ſo, we may make a right Conceit of what we are juſtly to expect from Dr. *St.* in this occaſion: 'Tis this, [*The Faith of Proteſtants reduc'd to Principles.*]

2. Now *Principles*, as we have diſcours'd in the *Preface*, muſt either be *Evident* to *both* Parties, or at leaſt, *held* and *granted* by *both*; elſe no diſcourſe can proceed for want of Agreement in that on which all *Rational* Proceſs is grounded. Alſo, they muſt be

Proper for the End intended, or *Influential* upon the *Conclusion* which the Arguer aims to *evince*: otherwise, if the thing in question *deceive* not its Evidence and Truth from them, though those Propositions be never so evident in themselves, yet they cannot be to *It*, or in *this* Circumstance a *Principle*, whatever they may be in *others*. Wherefore, to make good this *Title*, Dr. *St.* is to produce nothing for a *Principle*, but what is either *granted* at first by *both* Parties, or else is of so open and undeniable an Evidence, as all the World *must* see and acknowledge it; such as are either *first Principles*, or those which immediatly depend upon them, and are comprehended under them: or, if he builds on any Propositions as Principles, which are not *thus* evident but *need* Proof, he is at least to render them evident ere he builds upon them. And, lastly, he is to apply them close to that which he professes to *conclude* from them; otherwise, he can never show them to be *Principles* in this occasion, any more than one can be a *Father* who has no *Off-spring*, or than any thing can be a *Ground* which has no *Superstructures*.

3. Next, we are to consider what Dr. *St.* means by the word [*Faith*] in this place. And, I hope, he will not think I injure him in supposing he has so good thoughts of the *Faith of Protestants*, as to hold 'tis more than

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a bare *Opinion*, whose Grounds may all be *false*: For if so, the Assent of Protestants as Faithful, may *possibly* be an *Error*, and all the Tenets they profess to be *Truths*, and hope to be sav'd by believing them, liable to be prov'd nothing, perhaps in reality but a company of *Lies*. If then (as in this supposition he must) he holds the Faith of Protestants *Impossible to be False*, he is oblig'd to *reduce* it into such Grounds and Principles as are likewise *Impossible to be False*; and, consequently, if it relies on Authority, he is to bring *Infallible Authority* for it; all that is *Fallible* (as Common sense teaches) admitting *Possibility of Falshood* in whatever is grounded on it. *Such* Grounds then or Principles he is oblig'd to produce for the *Faith of Protestants*, in case he holds it may not perhaps be an Error for any thing he or his Church knows. But, in case he judges this Assent or Belief of Protestants may be *True Faith* though the Grounds of it may be *False*, then he ows me an answer to *Faith Vindicated*, where the contrary is prov'd by multitudes of Arguments; not one of which has yet receiv'd one word of sober Reply from him or Dr. *Tillotson*; though, as appears by the Inferences at the end of that Book, it most highly concerns them both to speak to the several Reasons it contains.

4. In the third place we are to reflect

what may be meant by the word [*reduc'd*] in the ſaid Title. And, ſince all Truths not ſelf-evident, nor known by immediate impreſſion on ſenſe, are at firſt *deriv'd* or *deduc'd* from Principles; this word [*reduc'd*] having a ſignification directly contrary to the other, intimates to us, that Dr. *St.* makes account he has begun by putting the *Faith of Proteſtants* which is the Concluſion, and *brought it back* (for ſo the word [*reduc'd*] imports) to *Principles*; whereas 'tis Evident to every Scholar, he proceeds in a way quite *contrary* to what he here pretends. Firſt, laying ſix Principles *agreed on*, then thirty others, which, ſince they go before his Concluſions we are to think he meant for Principles too, and thence drawing in the Cloſe, ſix Inferences or Sequels; which is moſt manifeſtly to *deduce from* Principles, not to *reduce to* them.

5. But, however it be blameable in one who owns himſelf a *Scholar*, eſpecially pretending the rigorous and learned way of proceeding by *Principles*, not to underſtand the nature of the *Way* himſelf takes; yet let us kindly ſuppoſe that Dr. *St.* out of an unwarineſs only, made uſe by chance of an *improper* word; which being but a human lapſe, is more eaſily pardonable; eſpecially, ſince the Method he here undertakes, *viz.* to begin with Principles, is (if rightly man-

manag'd and perform'd) the most honorable for a Scholar, and the most satisfactory that may be, and, so, deserving to make amends for many greater faults. Let him then by [*reduc'd to Principles*] mean *deduc'd from Principles*] yet since both *reducing* and *deducing*, imply the showing a *Connexion* between those Principles, and what's pretended to be drawn from them; and this either *Immediate*, as to every particular Conclusion, or *Mediate*: We are to expect Dr. *St.* should still show us this Connexion: which is best and most clearly done, by relating each of his six Conclusions to their respective Premisses or Principles: that *so*, by this distinct proceeding and owning particularly *whence* each Deduction *follows*, we may be better enabled to discover the Goodness of his Consequences, and thence discern clearly the Truth of those Conclusions; which we are to suppose, his Intention in making those Discourses.

6. In the last place we are to weigh very well what is meant by that signal and particularizing word [*Protestants*:] for 'tis the Faith of *these* and these *only*, which he undertakes here to *reduce to Principles*. And I will have the kindness for him, as to suppose he so much zeals the Purity of the Protestant Church, as not to defile her with the mixture of *Anabaptists*, *Independents*, *Quakers*,

kers, and such like, much less the most abominable *Socinians* who deny the *Trinity*, and the *Godhead* of *Christ*. Therefore, these being secluded from the notion and name of *Protestants*, we are encouraged by this Title to expect such a Discourse as is not proper for *Socinians*, or any of those other Sects to alledge for themselves; otherwise it might and ought with as much right be entitled *The Faith of Socinians, Quakers, &c.* (as the Faith of *Protestants*) *reduc'd to Principles*.

The sum then of what we are by this Title to expect from Dr. *St.* is this; *viz.* to shew us *such* Grounds for our Assent to Points as divinely reveal'd, as are *Impossible to be Erroneous*; and such as are not competent Allegations for *Socinians*, *Arians*, *&c.* but proper to *Protestants* only: Also, that these Grounds or Principles are such as are either *self-evident* or *made evident*. And this he is oblig'd necessarily to do, unless he will sustain either that *Socinians*, *Fift-Monarchists*, *&c.* are *Protestants*; or, that the *Faith of Protestants* is but *Opinion*; or, that there can be any Principles which are neither evident of *themselves* nor by means of *others*, that is, *no ways* evident, or *not* evident *at all*: Or, lastly, that he can *show* us any Conclusion *reduc'd to Principles*, or *deduc'd from* them, without shewing us that it is *connected* with them. This then is what

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Dr. S*t's* words bid us expect from him; let us see now how he answers this expectation.

Second Examen.

Six Principles agreed on by both sides examin'd, and their Import and Use weigh'd.

1. HE begins with laying down six *Principles agreed on by both sides*; and they are (as to the main) all of them very *True* and *granted* by us, if rightly understood: wherefore in case any ambiguous word do occur, I am to explain it, that so our perfect concurrence with him in admitting them may be rightly apprehended, and the discourse more unoffensively proceed, in case these Principles should come hereafter to be made use of. They are these.

1. *That there is a God from whom Man and all other Creatures had their Being.*

2. *That the notion of God doth imply that he is a Being absolutely perfect, and therefore Justice, Goodness, Wisdome and Truth must be in him to the highest degree of perfection.*

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These two first are rigorously and literally true, and worded very exactly.

3. *That man receiving his Being from God, is thereby bound to obey his will, and consequently is liable to punishment in case of Disobedience.*

This Proposition is also most true; yet that it may more throughly be penetrated and rightly apprehended, it were not amiss to note, that though the word [*obey*] generally amongst us signifies doing some *outward* action *will'd* by another, yet in this occasion 'tis to signifie also, nay principally, the exercising *Interiour Acts* of our soul, *viz.* of *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity*; in which kind of Acts consists our Spiritual Life, as we are *Christians*. That then this Principle may be better understood, I discourse it thus; that, Because God, as far as concerns his own Inclination (or rather Nature) precisely, out of his over-flowing Goodness wills all Good, and amongst the rest, the Means to Eternal Happiness to his Creatures; and the *Believing* in *Him*, *Hoping* all good from Him, and *Loving* him are such Virtues or Perfections of the Soul as are apt and connatural means to raise and dispose it towards the attainment of Bliss or Fruition

Fruition of the Deity, hence he wills that man ſhould *believe* on him, *hope* in him, and *love* him; whence are apt to follow the *outward* obſervances of his Law, and if they follow not out of *theſe* motives they are not properly *virtues* or truly Perfective of the ſoul in order to its Laſt end, nor available in the leaſt to the attainment of Bliſs; nor Acts of *Obedience* to God's *will*, nor in true ſpeech the *keeping his Commandments*. God therefore *willing* us Happineſs to be attain'd through the *proper means* to it, it follows that thoſe who *diſobey* this Holy *will* of his, that is, thoſe who do not cultivate their minds with the ſaid Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, become *liable* by *ſuch* their *diſobedience* to eternal miſery; as wanting through this neglect, the Proper *Means* which is to elevate them to the capacity of attaining Heaven.

4. *That in order to Man's obeying the Will of God, it is neceſſary he know what it is; for which ſome manifeſtation of the Will of God is neceſſary, both that Man may know what he hath to do, and that God may juſtly puniſh him, if he do it not.*

5. *Whatever God reveals to Man is infallibly true, and being intended for the Rule of Man's obedience may be certainly known to be his Will.*

I approve very wel of theſe two Principles. And to this end I make it my requeſt to the Propoſer of them, that the word [*manifeſtation*] and [*certainly known*] may be underſtood in their proper ſignification for that which is *True*, or *Abſolute Certainty*; and not be taken abuſively as Dr. *T*. ſtill takes it for ſuch a Certainty as is indeed *Incertainty*, as is ſhown at large in *Reaſon againſt Raillery and Faith vindicated*. Again, that we may know whether this be a *Principle agreed to by both ſides*, as Dr. *St*. pretends, I ſhall firſt put down our Tenet, which is; that (at leaſt) the Paſtors of the Church, who are to teach the Faithful, convert Unbelievers, (amongſt whom are many acute wits) as alſo to defend their Faith, and make out the Truth of it, may, nay muſt have Infallible Grounds, and ſo be *Infallibly* or Knowingly *Certain* of *what God revealed to Man*, that is, of their *Faith*. If then Dr. *St*. grants the wiſeſt portion in Gods Church to be thus *Infallibly Certain* of their Faith, we *agree* with him in this Propoſition; but if he denies this kind of Certainty to them, and conſequently (there being no middle between *Infallible* and *Fallible*) ſays they, and ſo, the whole Church is only *Fallibly-Certain* of what they believe; he both ſpeaks *non-ſenſe*, and lays for a Principle *agreed on by both ſides*, that which

which is absolutely *deny'd* by us, and indeed the main point in Controversy between us.

6. *God cannot act contrary to those Essential Attributes of Justice, Wisdom, Goodness and Truth in any way which he makes choice of to make known his Will unto man by.*

This Principle is absolutely granted, having no Fault in it, but that it expresses not all the Truth it ought; for *God* not only cannot act *contrary* to those Essential Attributes, but he is oblig'd by his very Nature to act perfectly *according* to them, in making choice of such a Way or Rule to make known his Will unto man by, as shall be (all things consider'd) most proper for Mankind; that is, most suitable to the respective Capacities of those who are to be led by it, that so their Acts of Faith (as far as they spring from the Provision of motives laid by God) may be pefectly rational; and also most effectual to the end for which God intended that Rule and Faith which depends on it.

These are the six *Principles* Dr. *St.* proposes as *agreed to by both sides*; which (in the main, and thus understood) are of so *universal* a Nature, and such *sacred* Truths, that if he draws any necessary consequences

from them to the establishing the Faith of Protestants, or overthrowing that of Catholicks (which latter seems chiefly intended) his Victory is likely to be very compleat; If he does not, but rather makes no use at all of them in concluding from them what he pretends, and his Title imports, it must needs be understood that they were only produc'd to make a plausible show, and to prepare the Readers mind to Apprehend he must necessarily conquer all before him, having such sacred Principles engag'd in his Patronage.

One thing more I am to add on this occasion; which is, that no discourse at all can proceed, unless *all* the Principles be *agreed to by both sides*; for, if the Person against whom we argue deny our Principles, 'tis a folly to hope by means of them, to force him to admit of the Conclusion depending solely on those Principles for its Truth and Evidence. But we are to reflect, that an Adversary may two manner of ways grant us our Principles; either *voluntarily* and of his own accord; or else *forcibly*, that is, convinc'd by strength of Argument, if the Principles be subordinate ones, and so can admit Proof; or for fear of shame from Human Nature, if they either be *First* Principles, or that the Controversy by discourse be reduc'd to that *most Evident* Test. Since

then

then Dr. *St.* makes account we yeild him but these six *voluntarily*, we are to expect from him such manifest proofs for the other thirty, as may make us by the clearness of their Evidence, or under the penalty of having Mankind our Enemy for deserting Rational Nature, assent to their verity: otherwise, there is no hopes for him to conclude any thing at all, while we are at liberty to deny every thing he builds on. But alas! how far is it from such Talking Disputants, even to *think* of such performances; though the necessity of his duty, if he pretends to Principles, obliges him unavoidably to it.

Third Examen.

Sifting the first nine Principles that seem to concern the Nature of Divine Revelation in Common, and its several ways.

After these six Principles *agreed on*, follow thirty other Paragraphs, or whatever else we may guess it fit to call them; and they are introduc'd by this Transition.

These things being agreed on both sides, we are now to inquire into the particular ways which

which God hath made choice of for revealing his Will to mankind.

I expected that since Dr. *St.* had promis'd us to *reduce the Faith of Protestants to Principles*, he would after he had put down the Principles voluntarily *agreed to by both sides*, have pursu'd the Method himself had made choice of, and have produc'd next, the Principles made use of by him in this particular matter which we are not *voluntarily agreed on*; and either have maintain'd them to be First Principles, and so, *self-evident*; or else *subordinate* ones, and deriving their Evidence from those First, and therefore have shown us their *derivation* from them, or *Connection* with them. This had been a Method becoming a man pretending to ground himself on Principles, especially in a discourse where this, and this only was pretended; for by this means it might, as reason requires, have been examin'd first, whether those Principles had subsisted or no in themselves; which, if they had, then only the Consequences had needed Examination; and so the Business of Truth had been quickly decided.

2. But, instead of this candid and clear and Methodical proceeding, thirty odd kind of Sentences, Sections, Paragraphs, or I know not what, come hudling in one after

ter another, of ſuch uncouth faſhions, ſuch deſperate and diſagreeing natures, ſo void of coherence with one another, that none knows well what to call them, not even Dr. *St.* himſelf, as appears by the Carriage of the matter. Some of them ſeem deductions from the Principles agreed on. Others ſeem to contain Intire diſcourſes of themſelves. The Illative particle [*therefore*] or its Equivalent, which neceſſarily Uſhers in all Concluſions, is ſo rarely heard of here, that one would verily think they were all Premiſſes or Principles; but this Conceit is again thwarted, becauſe divers of them are meerly Hypothetical Propoſitions, involving ſometimes ſuch a condition as never was put; others are bare voluntary Aſſertions and Falſe into the bargain. Some few of them pretend modeſtly to own themſelves deductions from ſome other Paragraphs, but yet onely hint it afar off, as it were, not ſpeak it out plainly, as if they fear'd ſome danger: Others pretend to draw a Conſequence in their Cloſe, not at all following from the part foregoing. Laſtly, the whole maſs of them hang together like *a rope of ſand* for want of declaring their Relation to others; and, though now and then they counterfeit a ſemblance of ſome ſleight coherence, yet their whole Frame is looſe and ill-built for want of an orderly and

viſible

visible dependance of one part on another. Now, this odd variety in their Complexions puts an attentive Considerer at some loss what to name them; no Apellation fitting the thirty but that which is common to such Quantities of matter or Multitudes of lines (whether it be sense or non-sense) such as are Paragraphs, Sections, and such like: since their motly nature will neither let us call them Deductions, nor Conclusions, nor Principles, nor Propositions, nor Discourses, nor Inferences, nor *Postulatums*, nor Axioms, nor Maxims, nor Proofs, nor any thing of any such nature; and yet all this while the superscription is, *The Faith of Protestants reduc'd to principles.*

3. It were not amiss for all that, to consider what Dr. S*t* himself calls them, and to hope thence for some better knowledge of their nature than we could attain to by our own Consideration. But he is at variance with himself about the point, no one common name being capable to fit them all, where the things to be named are of so many Parishes or Families. All he does (as appears by his Transition) to make them all taken together, amount to an *Inquiry into the particular ways which God had made choice of for revealing his Will to mankind.* I do not by any means like this Insignificant word [*Inquiry*] 'Tis so very *safe*, that 'tis absolutely

lutely *Inconfutable*. Had he ſaid candidly and plainly, [Here follow the Principles *not agreed on voluntarily* which therefore I will make Evident, that my Adverſary's Reaſon may be forc'd to acknowledg their verity, and by that means my diſcourſe proceed, and way be made towards ſome Concluſion] he had offer'd me ſome play, for then I might poſſibly have diſcover'd the weakneſs or Inevidence of his Principles, or the ſlackneſs of his Conſequences; but now all my Attempts are defeated by this one pretty word [*Inquiry*] for though I ſhould hap to confute every line in all the thirty Paragraphs, yet ſtill after all this, none can deny but he has *inquir'd* into the Point in hand, whether he have produc'd one word to *evince* it, or no: Thus Dr. *T.* (in his late Preface) got rid of the hardeſt and mainly concerning paſſage in *Sure-footing*, by vertue of two inſignificant words, alledging that he had [*ſufficiently conſider'd*] it in his Rule of Faith, which words were perfectly verify'd, though (as appears in *Reaſon againſt Raillery Diſc. 8th*) he *readily granted* all I contended for as to that point. Once more I deſire our Learned Readers to reflect on the different manner in which I and my Adverſaries bear our ſelves towards one another. I candidly avow my Grounds to be Evident *Principles*, my *Conſequences* to

be *neceſſary*, my *Arguments* to be abſolutely-*Concluſive* or *demonſtrative*; and by ſo doing I offer them all the fair play imaginable; and, (truſting to the invincible force of Truth) expoſe my ſelf freely for them to lay hold of my diſcourſe where they ſee it their beſt Advantage. They on the other ſide make a ſhow indeed of bringing their Faith to *Principles*, becauſe the very pretence is honorable; but when it comes to performance are ſo far from owning the Principles they proceed on for ſuch, that (except in thoſe ſix agreed on, which, as ſhall be ſhown, are not one jot influential to the point they are aim'd to evince) they not ſo much as name the word [*Principle*] nor vouch any Argument *Concluſive*, or any *Conſequence* to be *Neceſſary*, much leſs candidly affirm ſuch in particular to be thus qualifi'd; but hide and obſcure all theſe in one dow-bak'd ſlippery word [*Inquiry*] by which means none can tell where to take any ſure hold of any part of their Diſcourſe.

4. Notwithſtanding that Dr. *St.* is thus ſhy to name theſe thirty Paragraphs, *Principles*, in regard they are ſo monſtrouſly unlike thoſe Clear and Evident Truths, which uſe, and ought to bear that ſacred name; yet 'tis manifeſt by his carriage he *meant* them for ſuch, and would have them

thought

thought such too; for they immediately *follow* after the *six Principles voluntarily agreed on*, as if they were the *other* sort of Principles, *not voluntarily agreed to*; and all of them *antecede* his six *Conclusions* or Sequels which he puts immediately to *follow* out of them. Again, the Running Title superscrib'd to them is, [*The Faith of Protestants reduc'd to Principles*:] All which manifests to us beyond Evasion that he makes use of and relies on them as Principles, though he be something bashful to call them so *directly*. Wherefore in compliance with his Intention, we will for once strain a word to the highest *Catachresis* that may be, and by a strange *Antiphrasis*, call *Black*, *White*, and all these Paragraphs, *Principles*.

5. Yet, though there be nothing of candid and clear and consonant to any maxims even of Natural Logick in this Discourse, yet I must allow that there is as much cunning and slight and Sophistry in it, as could well be stufft into so narrow a room: Wherefore, that I may not be like him, I shall openly profess before hand what I undertake, *viz.* to show plainly that he hath not spoke one efficacious word to the purpose he intended; that is, he has not produc'd any one Principle, one Reason, one Argument, either settling in the least, the Faith of Protestants, nor unsettling that of

Catholicks. This will be ſeen by our Examination of each particular Principle in order, and the Anſwer to them. To which I now addreſs.

1. *An entire Obedience to the Will of God being agreed to be the condition of mans happineſs, no other way of Revelation is in it ſelf neceſſary to that end, than ſuch whereby man may know what the Will of God is.*

Love of God above all things, and of our Neighbour for his ſake being the *Fulfilling of the Law*, does by conſequence include in it ſelf eminently an *Intire Obedience to the Will of God*, and is agreed to be the *Condition of mans Happineſs*. Yet this *Love* or *Charity* preſuppoſing *Hope*, and both *Hope* and *Love* preſuppoſing *Faith* as their *Baſis*; both of theſe do by conſequence come within the compaſs of *Obeying the Will of God*, and are in their ſeveral manners and according to their ſeveral natures [*Conditions of mans Happineſs.*] as I doubt not but all ſober Proteſtants will grant.

Again, *Faith* being part of our *Obedience* to the Will of God, and ſo, *commanded* by him, and it being againſt thoſe Attributes of God *agreed on by both ſides*, to command Man to act contrary to the right Nature himſelf had given him and eſtabliſh'd it Eſ-

ſential

ſential to him, that is, contrary to *true Reaſon*; Alſo, Faith being a *Virtue*, and ſo agreeable to *right Nature*, nay more, a *ſupernatural* Virtue, and ſo, *perfecting* and elevating Right Nature or True Reaſon, not *debaſing* or deſtroying it; it follows, from theſe and many other Reaſons alledg'd in *Faith Vindicated*, that this part of our Obedience call'd [*Faith*] muſt be *rationabile obſequium*, a Reaſonable Obedience, and that our Aſſent call'd [*Belief*] taking it as impos'd by God, is conformable to Maxims of Right Reaſon, and that it perfects, and not in the leaſt perverts *Human Nature*. But it is directly oppoſit to Human Nature as given us by God, or to Right Reaſon, to aſſent and profeſs that Points of Faith are True (as the Nature of Chriſtianity ſettled by our Saviour enjoyns us) in caſe we are to rely ſolely on the Divine Authority for the formal Motive of this our believing or holding them *ſuch*, and yet when we come to doubt concerning their Truth, cannot poſſibly arrive to ſee any Grounds abſolutely Certain, that the Divine Authority is *indeed* engag'd for the Truth of the ſaid Points. Alſo, 'tis quite oppoſite to Human Nature to love Heaven above all things, in caſe there be not Grounds abſolutely certain that God has told us there is ſuch a thing as Heaven, or ſuch a Bliſsful ſtate attainable by us in the

the ſight of Him: wherefore, when Dr. *St.* ſays *no other way of Revelation is in it ſelf neceſſary to this end*, or to the *Entire Obedience to Gods Will, than ſuch whereby man may know what the Will of God is*; we are to mean by the word [*know*] that at leaſt the governing part of Gods Church, or *Eccleſia docens*, may be *abſolutly-certain* that the Points of Faith, (the aſſenting to and profeſſing which, and grounding upon them *Hope* and this all-over-powering *Love* of Heaven, the main part of our Obedience) are *True* or *Impoſſible* to be Falſe. If then Dr. *St.* takes the word *know* in this ſignification, this Principle is granted: if in any other, or for a great *Hope* only that they are True (as I fear when it comes to the point, he intends no more) I muſt for the Reaſons here given, and many more alledg'd in *Faith Vindicated*, and *Reaſon againſt Raillery*, deny that *no other way of Revelation is neceſſary*, and put him to prove it, which he neither *has* done, nor *can* do.

2. *Man being fram'd a rational Creature capable of reflecting upon himſelf may antecedently to any External Revelation, certainly know the Being of God and his dependance upon him; and thoſe things which are naturally pleaſing unto him; elſe there could be no ſuch thing as a Law of Nature, or any Principles of Natural Religion.*

I suppose he means by the word [*God*] the *True* God, and then 'tis not so evident that every Man in the state of *corrupt* Nature may arrive to *know* him, however some *few* may, and in the State of *Right* Nature, *All*. And in case he takes the words [*certainly know*] in their proper signification, then he may consider how ill his Friend Dr. *Tillotson* discourses, who professes not to have, even with the assistance of *Christianity*, that *Certain Knowledge* of the *Being of God*, which (as Dr. *Still.* says) was attainable by the meer Light of Natural Reason.

3. *All Supernatural and External Revelation must suppose the truth of Natural Religion; for, unless we be antecedently certain that there is a God, and that we are capable of knowing him, it is impossible to be certain that God hath reveal'd his will to us by any supernatural means.*

If he means here *Priority* of *Nature*; 'tis to be granted; for this Proposition [*God has reveal'd*] implies and presupposes as its *basis* [*God is*] But, if he understands it of priority of *Time*, as I conceive he does, then I both deny the Proposition, and the validity of the Reason given for it. For, 'tis Evident both by Reason and Experience, that manifest and Convictive Miracles (which

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are *ſupernatural* and *external Revelations*) done before the Heathens, who yet know not the *true God*, in Teſtimony of Chriſtianty, *at once* or at the ſame time made it certain that he whom we adore is the *True God*, and alſo that *God reveal'd his will by ſupernatural means:* and ſo 'tis not *Impoſſible* (as Dr. *St.* here affirms) to be certain of *ſuch* a Revelation, without knowing any time *before hand* that there is a God, nor *muſt All Supernatural and External Revelation* needs *ſuppoſe the Truth of Natural Religion*, that is, of the Knowledge of the True God, as he pretends; ſince ſuch a Revelation may *cauſe* that Knowledge, and ſo *antecede* it, not be antecedent to it.

4. *Nothing ought to be admitted for Divine Revelation which overthrows the Certainty of thoſe Principles which muſt be antecedently ſuppos'd to all Divine Revelation. For that were to overthrow the means whereby we are to judge concerning the Truth of any Divine Revelation.*

This Diſcourſe ſeems at the firſt ſhow to carry ſo clear an evidence with it, that nothing appears ſo Irrational as to doubt or diſpute it. And indeed 'tis no leſs, if the words in which it is couch'd be not equivocally taken, but ſtill be meant in the ſame ſence. To prevent then the growth of a wit-

ty piece of Sophistry which I foresee creeping in under the disguise of an ambiguous word, I am to provide against it with a distinction both pertinent and necessary to the present matter.

These words [*Divine Revelation*] may either mean the *way* or *Act* of *Revealing*, or else they may mean the *Thing divinely reveal'd*, that is, the *Point of Faith*: which differ as *showing* and *thing shown*, or as an *Action* and it's *Effect*. In the same manner as the word *Tradition* is sometimes taken for the *Way* of *Delivery*, sometimes for the *Thing* or *Point delivered*. When they are taken for the *one*, when for the *other*, partly the circumstances and the aim of the discourse determin, partly some annext particle or variation of the word; so that, if they be taken for the *Thing* reveal'd or deliver'd, and be expres's'd singularly, 'tis call'd *A Divine Revelation*, or *A Tradition*; If plurally, *Divine Revelations*, or *Traditions*. Now it seems something doubtful in whether sense it be taken *here*, for §. 1. he speaks of the *Way of Revelation*, which can onely mean *Revealing*, and in the two following ones 'tis taken in the same sense as appears by the words [*God hath reveal'd*] found in the Third. But this matters not much, so it be here taken in the same sense throughout; which I fear 'tis not; For, the word

[*Revelation*] is here made use of thrice; and, in the first and last place it seems plainly to mean the *Points revealed*; in the middle the *Way* or *Act* of *Revealing*; yet the two following Principles incline the doubtfulness of the Expression to mean the *Points of Faith* themselves; Though this be, to speak moderately, by far the more prepostrous and absurd Tenet, as shall hereafter be shown. But I am to provide for both parts since I am to skirmish with such an ambidextrous Adversary; and therefore, applying this discourse to his Proposition, I distinguish thus, and grant that *Nothing ought to be admitted for Divine Revelation* (taking those words to signifie the *Act* of Revealing) *which overthrows the Certainty of those Principles which must be antecedently supposed to the Act of Revealing*: Also I grant that *nothing ought to be admitted for Divine Revelation* (taking those words to signifie *Points of Faith revealed*) *which overthrows the Certainty of those Principles which must be antecedently suppos'd to those Points*. This is candid and clear dealing, and far from that sophistical and equivocating ambiguity which (contrary to the *Genius* of Truth) he so constantly and so industriously affects.

5. *There can be no other means imagin'd whereby we are to judge of the Truth of Divine Revelati-*

Revelation, but a Faculty in us of discerning Truth and Falshood in matters proposed to our Belief; which if we do not exercise in judging the Truth of Divine Revelation, we must be impos'd upon by every thing which pretends to be so.

Here are many quaint things to be considered. For, if Dr. *St.* means that we cannot *judge of Truth* without a *Faculty to judge of Truth*, 'tis a most certain Principle, though very little to his purpose. But 'tis most strangely paradoxical to say that *no other means can be imagin'd to judge of Divine Revelation*, but such a *Faculty*. For, if *there can be no other means imagin'd* but this *Faculty*, then This is *all* the means; and so those *Knowledges* which are to inform and direct this *Faculty* are *no* means at all: whence all *motives* to Faith, *Rule* of Faith, all Teaching, nay Scripture it self are to no purpose; For none of these are *our Faculty of discerning Truth and Falshood.*

Again, what is meant here by [*Divine Revelation?*] If it be meant of the formal *Act* of *Revealing*, then 'tis False that *there can be no other means to judge of its Truth but a Faculty in us of discerning Truth and Falshood in matters proposed to our Belief:* For these *Matters* are *Points* of Faith, and 'tis a madness to think we must begin with examining

their Truth ere we can know that God has *truly* or indeed *reveal'd* them; since the Knowledge that God has reveal'd or spoken is had ordinarily by natural means antecedent even to the Revelation it self, much more antecedent to those Points; *viz.* by the *Rule of Faith*, which shows the Divine Authority engag'd for their Truth. But, if he means by *Divine Revelation* the things or *Points divinely reveal'd*, and (as appears by those words [*matters propos'd to our belief*] he bends strongly that way) then the sense is evidently this, that we must *judge* the truth of the Points of Faith by *exercising a Faculty of judging* of the Truth of those Points: And since *to judge* is *to exercise our Faculty of judging*, it amounts plainly to this, that we must judge of the truth of Points of Faith by judging of the truth of points of Faith; which is an Identical Proposition and perfectly true, but not at all to his purpose. Yet it is too: for 'tis creditable now and then to speak *clear Evidences*, however in reality they prove *Impertinencies*.

But if Dr. *St.* means nothing but that we must use our Faculty of discerning Truth and Falshood, that is indeed our *Reason* even in Assenting to things *above* Reason, or to *Mysteries of Faith*, he says very right: For 'tis most Rational to believe that to be True which God, who is essential Verity, *has said*;

ſaid; and exceedingly Rational to believe God *has ſaid* it, or (which is all one in our caſe) that Chriſt and his Apoſtles have taught it, upon an Authority *Inerrable* in that affair. And thus my Faith may be moſt Rational without exerciſing my Reaſon in ſcanning and debating the *Truth or Falſhood of the matters propos'd to my Belief*, or examining the *Points* of Faith themſelves. Nay more this Method of his is moſt prepoſterous and abſurd; For, the *Myſteries* or *Points of Faith* being elevated above the pitch of our ordinary Natural Reaſon, and ſuch, (for the moſt part) in which Gods Infinity moſt exerts (as we may ſay) It's utmoſt, but the Knowledge of the *Rule of Faith* which is to aſcertain to us the Divine Revelation or that God has told us them, lying level to our Reaſon as inform'd by natural Knowledges; hence, to relinquiſh the method of examining the Truth of Divine Revelation by thoſe Knowledges which lie within our own ken, and to begin with thoſe which are moſt elevated above it (as it is to comprehend the extent of Gods Infinite Power) is both againſt all Art and Common ſenſe: Both which tell us we muſt begin with what's *more eaſily* knowable and thence proceed to what is *leſs* Knowable. Nor is there any danger of being *impos'd upon by every thing that pretends*

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to be Divine Revelation (as the Dr. ſcruples,) as long as we are Certain that *God cannot lie*, and that *God has ſaid this*; for theſe put, the thing is *moſt certainly True.*

6. *The pretence of Infallibility in any perſon or Society of men muſt be judged in the ſame way that the Truth of a Divine Revelation is; for that Infallibility being challeng'd by virtue of a ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, and for that end to aſſure men what the will of God is, the ſame means muſt be us'd for the trial of that, as for any other ſupernatural way of God's making known his Will to men.*

Here the words [*A Divine Revelation*] which he now *firſt* uſes, give us to underſtand that Dr. *St.* means *a Point of Faith* and not *Gods Revealing* it or *Divine Revelation*; which words he us'd formerly. And this is farther confirm'd by his ſaying that *that Infallibility which is challeng'd by vertue of a ſupernatural Aſſiſtance muſt be judg'd in the ſame way that the Truth of a Divine Revelation is*: For, ſuch an *Infallibility* through *ſupernatural* Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, conſiſts in the *Sanctity* of the Church, which is a *Point of Faith*, and ſo the words [*A Divine Revelation*] which he joyns and parallels to it, muſt mean a *Point* of Faith alſo. Whence is diſcern'd what marvellous dexterity Dr.

St.

St. hath us'd to gain a notable Point againſt us, and how ſmoothly he hath ſlided from *Gods revealing* Faith to us, or the *Act* call'd *Revelation*, to the *Points* of Faith *reveal'd*: In hope by this confounding one with another to perſwade his unattentive Reader; that, becauſe 'tis the only right way of procedure to begin with the uſing our natural Reaſon ſo to judge whether *God hath Revealed* ſuch a point or no; therefore 'tis fit to begin with the ſame Method in examining the *Points* of Faith themſelves which pretend to be *reveal'd*, and thence conclude whether they be indeed divinely reveal'd or no: which how abſurd it is hath lately been ſhown.

But to come cloſer and apply this to his preſent Diſcourſe. *The Pretence of Infallibility by virtue of ſupernatural Aſſiſtance muſt* indeed *be judged in the ſame way that the truth of a Divine Revelation is*; for both of them being *Points of Faith* muſt be judged by the ſame way all other points of Faith are; *viz.* by the Evidence there is that the Divine Authority cannot deceive, and that it ſtands engaged for thoſe Points.

7. *It being in the power of God to make choice of ſeveral ways of revealing his Will to us, we ought not to diſpute from the Attributes of God the neceſſity of one particular way to the Excluſion*

cluſion of all others, but we ought to enquire what way God himſelf hath choſen; and whatever he hath done, we are ſure cannot be repugnant to Infinite Juſtice, Wiſdome, Goodneſs and Truth.

I do not remember to have heard that any man living ever went about to diſpute from the Attributes of God *alone*, *the neceſſity of one particular way to the Excluſion of all others*, nor does it appear how 'tis poſſible to do it without conſidering *alſo* the Nature of thoſe ſeveral *ways* of Revealing: in doing which if we come to diſcover that only *one* is (as things ſtand) of it ſelf *ſufficient* for that End, and all *others* pretended to by thoſe againſt whom we diſpute *depend* on *It* for their Certainty, then they can ſafely argue from the Attributes of God, particularly his *Wiſdome* that none but this could have been actually choſen by him. So that Dr. *St.* ſeems here to counterfeit an *imaginary* Adverſary, having never a *Real* one. This will better appear if we attempt to frame a Diſcourſe from Gods Attributes *alone*. In endeavouring which it will appear that all we can argue from that ſingle Head is this; that, *Whats diſagreeable to Gods infinite Juſtice, Wiſdome, Goodneſs, and Truth cannot be will'd by him, and what's agreeable can.* Now who ſees not that this ſignifies nothing either to the

the Excluſion or Admiſſion of any particular Way, unleſs we ſubſume thus, *But this or that is moſt agreeable or diſagreeable to the ſaid Attributes*; whence follows, *therefore it is to be admitted, or rejected by him.* Whence 'tis clearly ſeen that no Argument can be drawn from thoſe Attributes *alone* without taking in the conſideration of the nature of the *Way* it ſelf, and its ſufficiency or inſufficiency, as Dr. *St.* himſelf confeſſes in common at the end of the 8th Principle, though he perpetually avoids to examin the particular nature of his Way, and its Fitneſs for mankind to build Faith upon its evidence. Yet let us ſee at leaſt though it be ſo plain a point how weakly he proves that we are not to argue from thoſe Attributes, *It being* (ſays he) *in the power of God to make choice of ſeveral ways*, &c. *we ought not to diſpute from the Attributes of God the neceſſity of one particular*, &c. ſo that the Argument ſtands thus, Becauſe 'tis within the extent of Gods *Power*, therefore it croſſes not but agrees with all thoſe other Attributes; otherwiſe, if it did, we could with good reaſon *argue* from them againſt Gods having made choice of ſuch a way. Now this reaſon of his is ſo palpably abſurd that I admire the meaneſt Divine living could ſtumble upon it. For what man who holds God *Omnipotent* can doubt but that his *Power* can reach to reveal his Will

to every single man by hourly Apparitions, the flying of Birds, nocturnal Dreams, or throwing of Dice upon a Fortune-book: yet no wise man will doubt but were we to inquire what is the way *fit* for God to reveal his Will to mankind by, we should reject these as misbecoming Gods Wisdom, *&c.* and for the same reason all others but *one*, in case none but *that one* were *of it self* qualified to do that Effect as it *ought*, and so befitting Gods Wisdome to make choice of it; and yet, notwithstanding all this, it might lie within the the compass of the *Power* of God to chuse several others.

It follows; *but we ought to enquire what way God himself hath chosen; and whatever he hath done we are sure cannot be repugnant to Infinit Justice, Wisdom, Goodness and Truth.* All this is yeilded to, unless he means this to be the *only* way of arguing from Gods Attributes, as he would seem; which I must deny, and demand of him why 'tis not equally Argumentative to say, This way of Revealing or Rule of Faith, as both Experience and Reason shows, is evidently incompetent to give Faith that Certainty which its Nature and the many Effects to be produc'd by it, and Obligations incumbent on it, require it should have; therefore I am sure 'tis repugnant to Gods Justice, Wisdom, Goodness and Truth, and so can never

ver have been chosen by him. Or thus; *God is infinitly Wise, Good, Just and True; therefore he hath not chosen a way so Incompetent to those Ends.* In the same manner as out of the known Incapacity of a sieve to draw water, or to ferry one over the Sea to the *Indies*, we may conclude demonstratively that 'tis unbeseeming Gods Infinite Wisdome, Goodness, Justice and Truth to assign that for a Means to attain that End: Or, if God in some extraordinary case intends such a Miracle, 'tis necessary all those who are to use those means be absolutely assur'd of this wonderful Assistance; otherwise if they compass not that End, but perish in the Sea, they may blame their own presumptuous rashness (which would needs tempt God) for their miscarriage and not *God*, who never bound himself by promise in frequent and ordinary transactions to bring about Effects miraculously by *Imcompetent* Causes. How weakly Dr. *St.* presumes rather than proves that God *has chosen* Scriptures Letter to be *the Rule of Faith* will be seen hereafter.

8. *Whatever way is capable of certainly conveying the Will of God to us may be made choice of by him for the means of making known his Will in order to the happiness of Mankind. So that no Argument can be sufficient* à priori,

to prove that God cannot chuſe any particular way to reveal his mind by, but ſuch which evidently proves the Inſufficiency of that means for conveying the Will of God to us.

Firſt, Taking the words [*certain conveying*] to mean *Abſolute Certainty* as I prov'd before in this, and in divers Treatiſes of mine to be requiſit, I am next to diſtinguiſh the word [*capable*] which may either mean that the Way *in common* may *poſſibly* bear it, in caſe it ſhall pleaſe God to uſe his *beſt Power* to improve it, and make up its defects with all the Aſſiſtances it can need. Or it may mean that ſuch a *way* or *manner*, as it ſtands now on foot in the world (for example the Scriptures Letter as 'tis now contriv'd) is *of it ſelf capable* of conveying the will of God to us with abſolute Certainty, without needing any other Thing to regulate us in the underſtanding it. Whatever is *capable* in the later ſenſe I grant *may be made choice of by God for the means of making known his will*: For, *this* being ſuppos'd to have in it ſelf actually all that is requiſite for ſuch an effect, is fitting to be made uſe of by God, whoſe Wiſdome and Goodneſs it becomes (when he acts not miraculouſly) to uſe every thing *as it is* or according to its *nature* eſtabliſh'd by the ſame Wiſdome. But I deny that what is *capable* in the former

former ſenſe may alwaies be thus made choice of by God; For, however ſuch a *way* in common may be made *capable* to do that effect, if it ſhould pleaſe God to exert his Power to ſupport its natural defectiveneſs, as is exemplifi'd before in Dreams, Apparitions, and thoſe other odd methods there mention'd; yet 'tis unſuitable to Gods Wiſdome, Goodneſs or other Attributes to ſhow himſelf ſo extraordinarily in things which reach the Generality of Mankind, and this for a perpetuity, and ſo ought to be allow'd onely his ordinary Concourſe; eſpecially if *other* means be already plac'd in the world able to perform this with a conſtant, orderly and connatural aſſiſtance. If then we can prove the Inſufficiency of any Particular means (taking it alone as 'tis now found extant) belonging to ſuch a way in Common, for example of the Scriptures Letter *as it now is*, to give Mankind *Abſolute Certainty* of Gods ſenſe, or *Faith*; then, however the *way* of *Writing* in Common can poſſibly be ſupported by Gods Infinit *Power* ſo as to be able to work the Effect of thus Certifying us of its ſenſe, yet not being ſuch of its own nature, taking it as it ſtands now thus contriv'd, 'tis not a fitting Inſtrument for Gods ordinary Providence to make uſe of for ſuch a general Effect as is the Certifying all ſorts of people of their Faith.

9. *There*

9. *There are ſeveral ways conceivable by us how God may make known his will to us; either by Immediate voice from Heaven, or inward Inſpiration to every particular perſon; or inſpiring ſome to ſpeak perſonally to others; or aſſiſting them with an Infallible Spirit in Writing ſuch Books which ſhall contain the Will of God for the benefit of diſtant perſons and future Ages.*

All this is granted and much more; for there are innumerable other ways conceivable how God *may* make known his Will to us, beſides thoſe here recounted, in caſe we regard only Gods *Power* to do it, and ſet aſide his Wiſdome and other Attributes; namely thoſe four ways mention'd by me above, and multitudes of other ſuch. But, out of all theſe, Gods Wiſdome, which has pre-eſtabliſh'd the nature of all things, will make choice of That which is fitteſt to perform the Effect intended, that is, to certifie abſolutely the firſt deliver'd Faith to us who live now. And, leſt it ſhould be too early underſtood which Way is beſt for that End, which would foreſtall and render void Dr. *St*'s future diſcourſes, he therefore very politickly quite leaves out any peculiar mention of *our* Rule of Faith, which one might have thought deſerv'd a place amongſt

mongſt the reſt. *Leaves out* I ſay, for thoſe words [*or inſpiring ſome to ſpeak perſonally to others*] ſute better with *Prophetical* Meſſengers than with the *Tradition of Gods Church.* Wherefore, premiſing this Note, that it is agreed Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught and ſettled the whole Body of Faith at firſt, and therefore that there needs no more *for us to know Gods Will* now, but to find out what is the *beſt* means of conveying *the ſame* down to our days, I beg leave to ſupply Dr. *St's.* neglects, and to inſert into the middle of this §. theſe words, [*or elſe by the way of open Atteſtation of a world of Immediate Chriſtian Fathers to a world of Children by living voice and conſtant practice of what they had learn'd by their daily ſenſations.*] which had Dr. *St.* done, any conſiderate Reader, whom his much talking of *Gods Power* and what God *may do,* had not diverted from reflecting that his Wiſdom determins his Power in ordinary and General Effects to do what according to the eſtabliſh'd natures of things is the fitteſt means to compaſs ſuch an end, would quickly have inclin'd to judge this the moſt connatural and fitteſt way, and therefore actually to have been made choice of by God; being aſſiſted or ſupported by the *baſis* of Human *Nature* according to its *Senſations* which are naturally fram'd to receive right Impreſſions, and according to his

his *Rational* Faculty, which determins him to ſpeak *Truth* ſtill in *open* and undiſguiſable *matters of Fact*; and, if that Body of men call'd *the Church* had any effectual means of Goodneſs in practice amongſt them, *ſuper-aſſiſted* alſo by *Grace* not to vary from right Faith, and knowingly deliver a Falſe for a True one.

And thus ends the firſt Diviſion of Dr. *St*'s. Diſcourſe promiſing *to reduce the Faith of Proteſtants to Principles*. In which I obſerve but a few things even hinted that can make for his purpoſe: and not ſo much as any one of them prov'd, but either ſlightly and ſlily inſinuated, or dexterouſly brought in, not by *Connexion of Terms*, (far be any ſuch piece of *Confidence* from ſo Learned and profound a Jeerer at *Demonſtration*) but by the virtue of ſome pretty Equivocation. I remind the Reader of the chief of them by putting ſome of my oppoſite Propoſitions, each of which is made good in its reſpective place.

1. *An Entire Obedience to the Will of God is principally performed by a heartily-aſſenting Faith, a Lively Hope, and an Ardent Charity, and not by outward actions otherwiſe than as they ſpring from theſe; therefore the way of Gods revealing his Will to us, or the Rule of Faith which grounds theſe, muſt be abſolutely-certain or Impoſſible to be Falſe.*

2. *The*

2. *The Nature of the Mysteries or Points of Faith are more remov'd from our knowledge than those Maxims which assure us that God reveal'd them; therefore 'tis not proper to begin with examining those Points but the Grounds for Gods revealing them.*

3. *This way of proceeding is perfectly secure; for, the Divine Authority being granted veracious, if there be Infallible Grounds that God has said them, those Points are Infallibly True: If not, they are not Points of* Faith; *and so, not worth examining whether they be True or no.*

4. *Gods* Power *alone gives us no Light what is or is not the* Rule of Faith, *but his Wisdom, Goodness, &c. joyn'd with the Knowledge of the Fitness or Unfitness of the Thing pretended to be so.*

5. *Gods Wisdome makes choice of that way to reveal his Will to the Generality of Mankind, which, according to its nature as now establish'd, is a capable or fit Instrument to such an Effect; and not by that way which is only capable to do it by an extraordinary working of his* Power.

These may serve for Antidotes to the opposite Positions, if he thinks fit to own them. For, though he is able to deliver himself as clearly as most men, if he pleases, yet he affects all over this discourse a strange perplext Intricacy and Ambiguity; and he

puts down his Principles in the ſame manner as a crafty Lawyer who had a mind to bring an Eſtate afterwards into diſpute, pens Writings. Much ſhifting wit there is in them, but nothing of candid, clear and down right. And this Intricacy is made greater by his unconnected way of diſcourſing; no man living being able to diſcern in better half of his odd-natur'd Principles what influence they have, either Immediate or Mediate, upon any thing following. The reſt of what is contain'd in theſe nine, are either Abſurdities, already laid open; or elſe Impertinent Truths, as will be ſeen by their uſeleſneſs in the Proceſs of this Diſcourſe.

A Discourse

CONCERNING

The Rule of Faith,

Necessary to the better clearing the following Principles.

THE several Ways of *Revealing*, (at least as many as Dr. *St.* thought fit,) being propos'd, he goes about in the next place to establish *one* of them, *viz. Writing*, to have been intended by God to be *the Rule of Faith*, or, the fittest means to ascertain Faith to us who live now; and this he does in the first five Principles: Whence he proceeds to reject the Infallibility of *any Church whatever* either to *attest* or *explain* those Writings; and this he attempts to prove in the *five* next.

On this occasion it were not amiss to declare before-hand, what I mean by *Rule of*

Faith, or rather to repeat ſomething of that much I have writ formerly concerning that point in my Second Appendix to *Sure-footing*, and elſewhere; that ſo (all equivocation being taken away) it may more clearly be ſeen where the Point ſticks on Dr. *St*'s. ſide, as alſo that his underſtanding me to have different ſentiments from ſome Catholick Divines in this matter may be remov'd; for, if I underſtand my ſelf or them, there is no variance at all between us in the *Thing*, but only in the *Word*.

It being agreed then amongſt us all that what Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught is *Gods Word*, or his *Will*, and the *Means* to Salvation; all that is to be done by us, as to matters of Faith, is to know with Abſolute Certainty what *was* the firſt taught Doctrine, or Chriſts ſenſe; and whatever can thus aſſure us of that, is deſervedly call'd *the Rule of Faith*. Now, the word *Rule* made uſe of to mean a *Spiritual* or *Intellectual Direction*, is Metaphorical, or tranſlated from ſome Material thing, as moſt words that expreſs *Spiritual* Notions are; and 'tis one of thoſe kind of Metaphors which are transferr'd from one thing to another for ſome *Proportion* or *Reſemblance* between them. For, as a *Material* Rule is ſuch a thing, as, if one endeavour to go according to it, and decline not from it, preſerves one from going

ing crooked; so, this *Intellectual* Rule call'd the *Rule of Faith*, is of that Nature, that, if one go according to it, and swerve not from it, it preserves one from going *wrong* or from erring, in his knowledge of what is *True* (or First-deliver'd) Faith; and *Faith* being intended for persons of all sorts or Capacities, *the Rule of Faith* must be able to preserve even those of the *meaneſt* Capacity from Erring in Faith while they relie upon *It*.

Agian, this being the *Proper* and *Primary Effect* of the *Rule of Faith*, and every Nature that is, having essentially in it self a Power to produce *of its self*, and without the Assistance of any other its *Primary Effect* (or rather being it self that Power) as man to discourse, Fire to burn, &c. it follows that, since to preserve all that relie on it in right Faith is the Proper effect of the Rule of Faith, what *has not* in it self the Power to do this, and this *of its self*, independently on any thing else but on God (who establishes the Natures of all things to be Certain Powers to produce their Proper Effect) is not in true speech a *Rule of Faith*: Since then not one Catholick in the World holds that Scriptures Letter *of it self* and independently on something else (*viz.* the Church's Tradition attesting the *Truth* of the same Letter, and

In-

Interpreting it) has *in it ſelf* Power thus to certifie perſons of all capacities of Chriſtian Faith, without poſſibility of Erring, nor any one but holds the Churches Authority is able alone to do this Effect, (ſince 'tis known and confeſt it actually perform'd this in the beginning) there is not one Catholick that I know of who holds either that the Scripture is *the Rule of Faith* (taking the words in *this* ſenſe) or that any thing but the Churches living voice and Practice, or Tradition is *It*; and, ſo taking the words *properly*, as I do, they *all* agree with *me*.

On the other ſide, taking thoſe words [*the Rule of Faith*] for any thing that *contains* Faith, or that may ſignify it with abſolute Certainty to people of all ſorts, *not of it ſelf*, but meerly by vertue of *another*, whoſe Power of Aſſerting the Truth of the Letter in thoſe Paſſages (at leaſt) that concern Chriſtian Faith, and of unerringly Interpreting it *lends* it to be thus certainly ſignificative of Gods Will; taking, I ſay, [*Rule of Faith*] in this ſenſe, as ſome of ours do, I grant with them that Scripture is a *Rule of Faith*. So that ſtill I agree with them in the *Thing*; only I diſſent from them in the *word*, and judge that this *Container* of Chriſts Doctrin, as now deſcrib'd, is but *improperly* call'd a *Rule of Faith*; as not having

ving in it ſelf the *nature* of ſuch a Rule, that is, not having a Power *in it ſelf*, and *of its ſelf* thus to aſcertain Faith by abſolutely engaging the Divine Authority.

This Diſtinction now given I learned from the *Council of Trent*; which no where ſays that Scripture is a *Rule of Faith*, as it does expreſly of *Tradition* (*Seſſ.* 5.) but only that it *contains* Faith, as alſo *Tradition* does; but whether it *contains* it in *ſuch a manner* that all thoſe who are to have Faith by relying on it, may by ſo doing, be abſolutely ſecur'd from erring, which is requiſite over and above to make it in true ſpeech deſerve the name of a *Rule*, the Council ſays nothing. I am ſure it is far from ſaying that people of all ſorts reading the Scriptures and attending ſolely to the Letter as interpreted and underſtood by their private ſelves, ſhall be ſure never to erre in right Faith; nay, it engages not for their ſecurity from erring ſo much as in any *one* point; which yet ought to be ſaid, if Scripture *in it ſelf*, and *of it ſelf* have the power of *regulating* them in their Faith or be a *Rule*. Rather the Council by its Carriage ſays the direct contrary; for, though being about to define againſt Hereticks it profeſſes to follow in its definitions the Writ-

written word, yet 'tis obſervable * that it no where builds on any place of Scripture, but it profeſſes at the ſame time to build its Interpretation of that place on Tradition; which evidently argues that though Scripture in the Judgment of the Council *contain'd* the Point, yet that which indeed *regulated* the Council in its Definitions, was the *Tradition* of the Church, as it alſo expreſly declares where ever it defines. And I dare ſay that there is not one Catholick in the world who thinks the Council knew not both *what* and *how* to define againſt *Luther* and *Calvin* at that time, without needing to ſeek its Faith *anew* in Texts of Scripture; which plainly concludes that the Council was not *regulated* by *It*, or look'd upon *it* as her *Rule*, but only conſider'd it as of a ſacred Authority and available againſt Hereticks profeſſing to rely on Scripture, and accuſing the Church for going contrary to the *Word of God*. Nay the Council defines that *none ſhould dare to interpret Scripture contrary to the ſenſe which our H. Mother the Catholick Church hath held and does hold*; which clearly takes it out of private hands, and makes the ſenſe of the Church, *ever* held, the *only* Interpreter of Scripture, eſpecially in matters of *Faith*, and extends to *all* Scripture; which unavoidably

* *See* Sure Footing *2d Ed. p.* 145, 146.

voidably makes it no *Rule of Faith.*

I am sure the Distinction now given shows my sentiment consistent, if not perfectly agreeing with that Common Opinion of our Divines, that Scripture is a *Partial Rule*; or that Scripture and Tradition *integrate* one *compleat Rule.* For they clearly mean by those words that Faith is *partly contain'd* in Scripture, *partly* in the Tradition of the Church. So that what they had an eye to in so doing was not the *Evidence* requisit to a *Rule*, but only the degree of *Extent* of Scripture to the matter contain'd in it; whence 'tis evident they meant onely that Scripture *contain'd some part of Faith*, which I perfectly allow to it, and perhaps more.

This is my Judgment concerning the notion of *the Rule of Faith* and *what* is *such* a *Rule*; and these my *Reasons* for that Judgment: If any one thinks he can go to work more Logically and exactly in finding out the true nature and notion of a *Rule*, and show me I take it improperly, I shall heartily thank him, and acknowledge my mistake. But I never yet discern'd any such Attempt, nor do I see any reason to fear any such performance. And I much doubt should any Catholick Divine out of a Charitable Intention of Union (which I shall ever commend and heartily approve) trusting to the Equivocalness of the *word*, say

Scripture is *the Rule* or *a Rule*, I much doubt (I say) that, when the thing comes to be examin'd to the bottom, it will scarce tend to any solid good; for, however *Words* may bend, yet the true *Grounds* of Catholick Faith are *Inflexible*; and we must take heed lest, while we yield them the *Word*, they expect not (as they may justly, having such occasion) that we should grant the *Thing* properly signify'd by that Word; which if they do, we must either recede, or else forgo Catholick Grounds.

But now the difference between me and Dr. *S*'s party is in the very *Thing* it self, and this as wide as Contradiction can distance us. For *Dr. *T.* (whom he still abetts) makes it *possible* that he has neither True Letter nor True sense of Scripture: that is makes his *Rule of Faith*, and consequently his *Faith* built solely on It, *possible to be False*. And all that go that Way fall unavoidably into that precipice, while they admit no Grounds but what are *Fallible*, as I have shown at large in *Faith Vindicated* and *Reason against Raillery*. Whereas I still bear up to the Impossibility that Christian Faith should be *a Ly*, and consequently I maintain that *the Rule of Faith* which engages the Divine Authority on which its *Truth* solely depends, and without engaging which it might be all

*Rule of Faith. p. 118.

False,

False, must be *Impossible* to be False, or Infallibly certain. And hence, taking my rise from the *Nature of Faith*, in which all *Protestants* and indeed all that have the name of *Christians* (except some few speculators) agree with me, *viz.* that, taking it *as built on those Motives left by God for his Church to embrace Faith*, that is, taking it as it *ought* to be taken, 'tis *above* Opinion and *Impossible to be False*; hence, I say, building on this mutual Agreement, I pursue a solid Union, which I declare my self most heartily to zeal; Hoping that this point once distinctly clear'd against the Sophisms and blinding Crafts of some weak Heterodox Writers, it will quickly appear that 'tis every mans Concern, who is of Capacity, to look after such Grounds that the Divine Authority (on which the Truth of all Faith depends) is engag'd for the Points he holds, as are *absolutely Certain* or *Impossible to be False*. And I make account, that, were this quest heartily pursu'd, it would quickly appear, both by others Confessing the *possible Falsehood* of theirs, as also by inforcing Reasons, nay by Dr. *Tillitsons* yielding to the sufficiency of this Rule, even when he was to impugn it, that nothing but *Tradition* or the *Testimony of the Church* can be *such* a Ground. Perhaps also it might be

Rule of Faith p. 153. *Reason against Raillery* p. 190, 191, &c.

ſhown that both more learned and more ſober Proteſtant Authors have own'd the admitting Tradition and a reliance on the Churches Authority for their Faith, and for the true ſenſe of Scripture in order to the attaining true Faith, than thoſe are who have maintain'd this private-ſpirited way ſo zealouſly advanc'd by Dr. *St.* of leaving it to be interpreted by every vulgar head; to the utter deſtruction of Church, and Church-Government. This is and ſhall be my way of endeavouring *Union*, which beginning at the bottom, and with our mutual Agreement in ſo main a point that it bears all along with it, *viz. the Abſolute Certainty of Faith*, is hopeful to be ſolid and well built, and, ſo, Effectual; if it pleaſe God to inſpire ſome Eminent and Good Men to purſue home a Principle which themſelves have already heartily embrac'd. If not, I have this ſatisfaction that I have done a due right and honor to Chriſtian Faith, and given it that advantage by aſſerting its perfect ſecurity from error, as, Gods Grace aſſiſting, is apt to make it work more efficaciouſly both interiourly and exteriourly in thoſe who already poſſeſs it.

Fourth

Fourth Examen.

Sifting the the ten following Principles concerning the Letter-Rule and Living Rule of Faith.

THe right nature of the *Rule of Faith* being thus ſtated, 'tis high time to addreſs to our Examen how Dr. *St.* from Principles ſettles us *ſuch* a Rule beginning from his tenth.

10. *If the Will of God cannot be ſufficiently declar'd to men by Writing, it muſt either be becauſe no Writing can be Intelligible enough for that end, or that it can never be known to be written by men Infallibly aſſiſted. The former is repugnant to common ſenſe, for words are equally capable of being underſtood, ſpoken or written; the later overthrows the poſſibility of the Scriptures being known to be the word of God.*

I have already ſaid, and in divers books manifoldly prov'd, that *no declaration* of God's will, or (which is all one in our caſe) no *Rule of Faith*, is ſufficient, conſidering the Nature and Ends of Faith, and the obligations ariſing from it, but what is *impoſſible*

to

to be false, and built on Infallible Grounds. This premised, we are to inquire, whether Writing be the *best* Way for *thus* assuring it in all Ages to the end of the world. To come then closer to our Answer.

We are first to reflect again what Dr. *St.* means by *the Will of God*, at least what he *ought* to mean by it: For, these words at the first sight, seem to signifie onely some External Actions commanded by God to be performed or avoided; and it is the Dr's Interest they should be taken onely in *this* sense; for *such* a *will* is more easie to be signifi'd by Writing than some other things of a more abstruse, spiritual and dogmatical nature, which yet are of absolute Necessity to be believ'd by the Church, such as are the points of the Trinity, Incarnation and Godhead of Christ who dy'd for us: since then *Gods Will* extends not only to aim at Mankinds Attainment of his Last End or True Happiness, but also to provide for the best means to it, or, to give us knowledg of those Motives which are apt to create in man a hearty Love of Heaven above all things (the best Condition of Mans Happiness or Immediate disposition to it) it follows that the holding all those Tenets which contain in themselves such Motives, do all come within the compass of the *Will of God*. To omit many others, I will instance in two

Points,

Points, of main Concern and Influence towards Christian Life; namely the *Godhead* of *Christ*, and the *Real Presence* of Christs *Body* in the *Sacrament*. Now, who sees not how wonderful an Ascendent both these, if verify'd, must needs have over Christian hearts? Can any Amulet of Love be so charming, or apt to elevate to the Love of God above all things, as to be ascertain'd that he who was really *GOD*, Infinite in all his Attributes, and Infinitely happy in himself, should, purely out of his overflowing Goodness toward miserable mankind, take his nature upon him, become his Brother, Friend, Physician, Master, nay suffer for his sake many hardships during his life, and at length buffeting, scourging, crowning with thorns, and a most cruel death on the Cross; and to keep the remembrance of these many Benefits warm in our hearts to give us after a wonderful manner his most precious Body and Bloud in a Sacrament instituted for that end; by this means not only reviving the memory of the former incomparable love-motive, but also adding new Incitements to that best of virtues by our apprehending lively that he so dearly embreasts and embosoms himself with us by his uniting himself to us through his corporal presence, that so our souls may by means of the *Love* springing from this consideration

* This writer can suppose nothing real, dead in not corporal; and, thus presume.

on, feed on, and be united to him *Spiritually*? On the other ſide, if theſe be not Truths, but that the Church may perhaps erre in embracing them, who ſees not that the Church it ſelf is *Idolatrous* (at leaſt, *materially*) in giving True Divine Honor which is Proper only to the Creator, to a Creature? Each of theſe two Points then is of that High concern as to Chriſtian Life and Practice, that it muſt needs be of its own nature either a moſt wicked and damnable Hereſy to *deny* or elſe to *aſſert* it: Wherefore 'tis the higheſt Impiety to imagin that God has left no Way to aſcertain Mankind whether theſe two Points (omitting many others) be True or Falſe; ſince 'tis unavoidable they are, if True, the greateſt and moſt efficacious helps to Chriſtian Devotion that can be; If Falſe, the greateſt Hindrances to the ſame; as corrupting the beſt Devotions of thoſe Chriſtians into Idolatrous worſhip. The Knowing then the truth of theſe and ſuch like, being moſt certainly *will'd* by God, we are to expect ſuch a Rule of Faith as is declarative of theſe, and ſuch as theſe, with Abſolute Certainty.

Let us now conſider whether *Writing* be the *beſt means* for ſuch an end; which if it be not, it may certainly be concluded from Gods Wiſdome, Goodneſs, &c. that it hath not been made choice of, or intended by God

God for it. But 'tis obſervable that Dr. *S.* perpetually waves any Diſcourſe of this nature, and chuſes rather to argue from Gods *Power*; which though I have already ſhown how Incompetent and Abſurd it is, let us examine at leaſt what works he makes of it.

If (ſays he) *the will of God cannot be ſufficiently declared to men by writing, it muſt either be, &c.* I muſt diſtinguiſh the words [*cannot be declared by writing*] as I did formerly; and affirm that they may either mean, that the *Way* of Writing, as taken in the whole latitude of its nature and ſtanding under Gods *Infinite Power* ordering it with all poſſible Advantage to the end intended, cannot ſufficiently declare Gods will, as to ſuch Points: or, they may mean that Gods Revelation of his Will by *Writing*, ſo qualifi'd as it is *now* actually found in the *Scripture*, cannot ſufficiently, or with abſolute Certainty declare Gods Will as to the Points aforeſaid to men of all capacities in all future Ages. Taking them in the former ſenſe, I deny the Propoſition, and ſay that Gods will as to ſuch Points can be ſufficiently declar'd by Writing. For, 'tis abſolutely within the compaſs of Gods *Power* to contrive a Book on that manner as might define exactly, or elſe explicate at large in what preciſe ſenſe every word that expreſſes each point of Faith is to be taken,

and to provide that it should never be taken in that book in more than that *one* sense, or, if in more, to notifie to us in which places 'tis taken in a different meaning. He could also have laid it so, that a hundred or two of Originals of these Books might be preserv'd publickly in several distant Countries from the Beginning, which might by their perfect Agreement bear Testimony to one another, and, so assure us the Text was kept hitherto inviolate even to a tittle, and also remain a Standard to correct all the multitudes of *Diverse Readings* which, as experience shows us, is apt otherwise to set the Copies at variance with one another. He could also have so order'd it that the *Original* Languages might have been as well understood by the Generality of the Church as their *own* is, & so have avoided the Uncertainty of Translations: Again, lest crafty Hereticks should at any time for the future, by wittily alluding places, or playing upon words, or other Sophistries, pervert the sense; Gods Power could have caus'd a Book to be written after the manner of a large Prophecy, foretelling that in such a time and place, such and such a Heretick should arise, perverting such and such a Point, and forewarn men of his Sophisms and Errours. This and much more might have been effected by Gods *Power* to establish Writing such an absolutely Certain and Intelligible Way: which

which why his Wisdome should not have done, in case *Faith* be an Assent which, while it relies on the Ground God has left for Mankind *cannot be an error*, (as it may be if none can be absolutely certain both of the *Text* and *sense* of Scriptures) I would gladly be informed: Especially since Dr. *St.* tells us there (Princ. 15.) there is no need of *an infallible society of men, either to attest or explain them*, and all that is *Fallible* (as common sense tells us) falls short of elevating it above *possibility of being an Errour*: whence follows that there being no means on foot in the world, Tradition of the Church failing, or being set aside, to secure us absolutely of this; it can only be had by the Extraordinary Operation of Gods Power securing the *Letter* of such writings, and rendering those *VVritings* themselves *perfectly Intelligible* in the manners assign'd, in case *VVriting* be indeed the RULE OF FAITH.

VVriting then *can* be *the Rule of Faith*, or able *thus* to ascertain Faith to us if Gods Infinit *Power* undertakes the framing it such as I have expres'd; but, because experience tells us 'tis *not so* order'd, let us leave this *Platonick* way of considering how things *should be* in that supposition, and following the *Aristotelian*, consider things as they *are*, and accordingly examin how *Gods* Wisdome *has* thought fit to order such Writings *actual-*

ly; and thence gather whether (however 'tis agreed between us, they be most excellent for other uses and ends) they were ever intended by the same Wisdome for *a Rule of Faith*. To evince the contrary of which, (not to repeat those many Arguments I have brought elsewhere,) I farther offer these Reasons.

First, If the Writings of men divinely inspir'd were meant for a Rule of Faith, then either *all* such Writings, as such, are therefore to belong to that Rule, or *some* onely; If *all*, then since *some* Writings granted to have been written by *such* persons are known to be *lost*, it may be doubted, nay it ought to be granted that the present Written Rule is defective in the nature of a *Rule*, unless it be well made out that those divinely-inspir'd Writings which were *lost* were of another Nature then these *extant*, and therefore that they had no part in being a *Rule*: The Proofs for which point ought to be very pregnant and convincing; otherwise it may be question'd whether *any* Books writ by men divinely inspir'd had in them the nature of a *Rule*, or were intended for *that* end by God. And this is particularly inforc'd, because, Dr. S. here (Princ. 28.) makes Scripture the Rule and *Measure* of what we are to believe; and if the *Measure* fall short, 'tis to be fear'd the *thing measur'd* or *Faith* will fall short likewise. But if he says onely *some* of those divinely-inspir'd Writings

Writings were ſufficient, 'tis very neceſſary it ſhould be made out *how many* are needful; that ſo it might be throughly underſtood what are the *preciſe Grounds* of Chriſtian Faith: concerning which yet there is much difference in opinion amongſt thoſe who hold the Letter-Rule; which ſignifies that none of them know diſtinctly what themſelves aſſign or hold to be that Rule. Or, if he ſays that onely thoſe which Gods Providence has preſerv'd are that Rule; then he muſt either ſay that Gods Providence therefore preſerv'd *theſe* becauſe they *contain'd holy Doctrin* and were *writ by men divinely inſpir'd*, or were apt to *benefit future mankind*; and then, by the ſame Reaſon, thoſe which *periſh'd* ſhould have been preſerv'd *too*; or elſe, that God preſerv'd *theſe* in particular becauſe theſe which remain are, beſides thoſe qualifications, *Proper* and *Sufficient* to be the *Rule of Faith*. And then he begs the Queſtion, and ſuppoſes his own *Tenet* true, even while he is proving it ſo.

Nex', ſuppoſing the Originals of theſe Books now extant to have been once the *Rule of Faith*, it was requiſite the Church in the beginning ſhould have look'd upon them as *ſuch*, and conſequently have made account for the firſt 300 years (till when they were not collected or univerſally propos'd) it had no *Abſolute Certainty* or *Entire Body* of their *Faith*.

But,

But, of this we hear not that any had the leaſt Jealouſie, or that they lookt after Books of Scripture as Things without which the Church was not either *abſolutely Certain* of its Faith, or had not *all* its Faith.

Again, had thoſe Books been then the Rule of Faith, as (conſidering that ſome of them were unacknowledg'd, one ſcatter'd here, another there accidentally) is ſenſleſs to imagin. Yet, how can we *now*, or, future Ages *hereafter* have Abſolute Certainty that ſome ſubſtantial word or other is not alter'd, omitted, or inſerted in thoſe places that concern the main Points of Faith (for example, the Godhead of Chriſt, or the Real Preſence) in caſe there be no Infallible Authority to *atteſt* the Truth of it, which Dr. *St.* denies here Princ. 15. It is not evident he muſt ſay that none of theſe can be made out with Abſolute Certainty, and conſequently confeſs with * Dr. *T. that all this may be otherwiſe*; unleſs he have recourſe to Gods Extraordinary Aſſiſtance to the multitudes of Tranſcribers and Tranſlators, becauſe of the Neceſſity the Letter ſhould be thus preſerv'd ſtill unchang'd, in regard otherwiſe none could ſay his Faith is *True*: which again begs the Queſtion, and *ſuppoſes* it the *Rule of Faith* inſtead of *proving* it ſo.

* *Rule of Faith.* p. 118.

Farther, Let the Letter be suppos'd exactly like the Original, how will that Letter secure from all possible Error all that rely on it, as the *Rule of Faith* ought, or, to use Dr. S[t]'s words (Princ. 15.) *reveal so plainly the whole will of God, that no sober Enquirer can miss of what is necessary for salvation*? Now if they *cannot miss* of what's necessary for salvation, *they must needs hit* on it, and so are in a manner *Infallible*, as to that point, while they rely thereon. To put it to the Tryal, let us consider what Disputes there are out of Scriptures Letter, between *Socinians* and their Opposers about a *Trinity* and the *Godhead of Christ*: and what between *Catholicks* and their Adversaries about the *Real Presence*. How many Interpretations of [*This is my Body.*] How many Allusions of one place to another in both those Points to hammer out the Truth, and these agitated on both sides, by Bodies of eminent men, excellent Scholars, Acute Scripturists? Must every *sober Enquirer*, and every private ignorant *person who sincerely endeavours* needs hit on the right, and judge better of these Points than all those Learned men? Or, must we needs conclude that all those learned Enquirers found in each of those vast different parties are *mad* or *Insincere*? I wish he would prove this: 'Tis his best Interest, and would give his Argument some likelihood, which till then has *none*: for the Fact being

so

so notorious, how *earnestly* they all *endeavour* to find out the Truth of these points by the Letter, none will judge but that if their Heads or Hearts be not strangely disorder'd by Folly or Insincerity, the Letter which should inform them, is strangely incompetent for that end. But 'tis remarkable how neatly Dr. *St.* skips aside from the Point. He undertakes not to give us any Assurance that his *sober* or *sincere Enquirers* shall by vertue of this his Rule of Faith, find out that *any one* point of his Faith is an *Absolutely Certain Truth*, but only that he shall *not miss of what is necessary for salvation, that he shall not erre*, or at least, *not be damn'd for it*. So that, for any thing appears by his discourse, let him but *read* the Scripture, though he holds nothing but *Error* by so doing, yet he is still in the *way to salvation* by the very *Reading* and Running into *Errour*. But this deserves a particular reflexion hereafter.

Lastly, the very nature and *Genius* of the Scripture, *as it now is*, shows that, however it be excellently *Useful* for perfecting the Lives of the Faithful in many regards, yet it was never intended for the *Rule of Faith*. For, (to omit innumerable other reasons frequently alledg'd by our Authors,) Its several parts were evidently writ on several emergent occasions, and have not the least semblance as if the *whole* had been purposely compil'd to deliver

liver an *intire* Body of Faith. Nor does it observe any method tending to *clear* each several Point. For, it neither begins with defineing or *explaining* every word made use of in signifying those Points, which is the best means to avoid Equivocation, the Ground of all *mistake*: nor does it pursue home the evidencing any one Point, by making us aware of the sinister senses in which *each word* expressing that Point might seem to be taken; nor does it put objections against each *Tenet*, and establish us in the right Apprehension of it by solving them, nor *distinguish* by laying common Rules to know when the words are to be taken *properly*, when *Metaphorically*, much less tell us particularly in *which* places each word is to be taken *thus* or *thus*: nor can it justifie with absolute or Infallible Certainty either its Text or Copy to be substantially like the Original, nor (if we may trust Dr. *St.* here Princ. 15.) can any Authority on Earth supply that necessary duty for it: nor, (it being requisite to compare one place to another so to find out the sense) does it tell us which place is to be compar'd to another as its *proper Explainer*, nor of the two alluding places which is to stand *firm* and be taken *as the Letter lies*; which to *bend* its signification in correspondency to that *other*; without fore-knowledg of which 'tis pure folly to think to avail our selves by *comparing Pla-*

est. None of these things, I say, are found in the Scriptures Letter as it lies; which notwithstanding, and perhaps many other such like, it had been agreeable to Gods Wisdome and Goodnes to have given it, in case it had been intended by him for a *Rule of Faith*, or such a Direction by relying on which, people of all capacities might have so well-grounded an Assent to those Points, as is impossible to be an Errour while they thus relie on it; which Assent in Christian Language we call [*Faith*]

On the other side 'tis evident that of some Points it gives onely accidental hints here and there without *insisting* upon them *amply* or *explaining* them *fully*; and that Book which was most designedly intended to assert Christs Divinity, was yet so far from putting it out of all dispute or preserving it from being oppos'd and call'd in question, that never yet did Heresie prevail so much against Gods Church as did the *Arians*, who deny'd that very Point of Faith. But what needs more to evince this Point than these two Arguments, one *à priori*, the other *à posteriori*. All words are either *Proper* or *Improper* and Metaphorical; of which *Proper* ones express that the Thing *is indeed* or *in reality so*: but *Improper* ones that 'tis *not indeed* or *in reality so*: whence it happens that in matters of so exact Truth as Points of Faith (especially when the Points

are

are of main Concern) it imports a plain Hereſie either to take a *Proper* word for an *Improper*, or, an *Improper* one for a *Proper*: For example, thoſe Texts expreſſing that God has *hands*, *feet*, *repents*, *grieves*, is *mov'd* by our Prayers, &c. are, if taken *properly*, wicked Hereſies and deſtroy the Spiritual and unchangeable nature of the Godhead. Alſo, to take thoſe words Chriſt is *man*, *ſuffer'd*, *dy'd*, *roſe again*, &c. *improperly*, are wicked Hereſies *too*, and take away the main ſupports of our ſalvation. This being ſo, it follows that the abſolutely-certain Knowledg when the words of Scripture *are* taken properly, when *not*, being determinative of what's *true Faith*, what *Hereſie*, it muſt be had from the *Rule of Faith* it ſelf, and ſo from the Letter of Scripture, if that be *indeed* the *Rule*. But this Knowledge is *not* had from the Scriptures Letter; for this muſt either be done by that Letters ſignifying in each place expreſly or equivalently that the words are properly or Improperly there taken, which is Impoſſible to be ſhown, nor was ever pretended; or elſe by ſignifying the *contrary* Point in another place; and this, as far as the bare Letter carries, or abſtracting from all Interpretation, can onely ſignifie that the Letter in *one* place ſeems to *contradict* it ſelf in *another* place; and this, as far as the bare Letter carries, or abſtracting from all Interpretation, can onely

signifie that the Letter in *one* place seems to *contradict* it self in *another* place, which is far short of giving us an unerring security which side is *Truth*. Or, if it be said, the Letter alone gives us not this security without some Interpretation, then this Interpretation performs what the Letter (if it be a Rule) *ought*, but *could not*, and determines with Absolute Certainty when the words are taken *properly*, when not; that is *gives us our Faith*; and consequently *that* Light or Knowledge, whatever it was, which the Interpreter brought with him, and had it *not* from the *Letter*, gave us the *right sense* of Scripture; and, so, *is*, not the *Scripture* was the *True Rule of Faith*.

From the Effect, or *à posteriori* I argue thus: We experience that Great Bodies of men of divers sects, with *equal* earnestness (as far as appears to us) go about to find their Faith in the Scriptures Letter, and equally profess to rely upon Gods Assistance to that end; wherefore either we must be forced to judge that *none* of those several sects do sincerely desire to find *True* Faith in the Scriptures, and so by Dr. *St's* Principles *no* sort of men in the whole world has right Faith; which quite takes away all Christianity; or else we must think *all* of them *truly desire* to find right Faith in the Scripture, and rely on Gods help to assist them, In which case, since the fault is not in *them* taken as applying themselves to their

Rule

Rule, and relying on it, and yet 'tis manifest they *differ* (that is *one* side errs) in most Fundamental Points, as in the Trinity, Divinity of Christ, Real Presence of Christs Body in the Sacrament, &c. it follows unavoidably that the Fault is in those persons in *holding* it their Rule, for, in case they err'd not in holding it *to be a Rule*, that is in case it were indeed apt to *ascertain* them *absolutely* if they *apply'd* it, and that they *did* actually apply it, it is *impossible* they should have ever *err'd*. Scriptures Letter then is far from securing men of all sorts, while they rely on it, from Errour; since whole Bodies of men, and, amongst those, multitudes of great Scholars and learned Scripturists *erre grievously* and that in *most Fundamental Points*, even while they rely upon it: Which if it destroy not the nature of a *Rule*, I know not what does. This Discourse being forelaid, we shall be able to make shorter work with his Principles, to which we now address.

Whereas then in his tenth Principle, he contends that *the will of God can be sufficiently declar'd to men by writing*. I answer, That by Extraordinary Contrivances and Actings of Gods Wisdome and Power *it may*; but that this will avail him little, since 'tis evident that *de facto* God *has not* thus exerted his Wisdome and Power in making Scriptures Letter fit for that End; whence we conclude that it

was

was never *meant* for a Rule: and, whereas he says that *words are equally capable of being understood, spoken or written*; I deny it absolutely; for nature teaches us that the countenance and Carriage of the Speaker, the Accent of the voice, the giving a due and living *Emphasis* to the words, with the whole Complexion of Circumstances in which the Speaker is found, and which generally are not unknown to the person to whom he speaks; and, amongst these, principally, his applying himself *pertinently* to the *present* exigency, Thoughts and Expectation of the *Hearer*: All these, I say, and many others give Living voice an incomparable Advantage over Dead Characters in point of Intelligibleness and Expressiveness: And, though Dr. *St.* may contend that whatever advantage in signifying, *That* has over *This*, may possibly be put in writing and expresst by means of many large Explications writ by the person himself that was to deliver his mind, yet he can never show that those Multitudes of words in those very Explications have the same degree of Significativeness and Intelligibility as if they had been spoken *vivâ voce* by their Author; since they will still want all or most of the Advantages now spoken of, which manifestly determine the signification of words. To omit, that all this will little make for his purpose when he comes to apply it; since Scripture

has

has no such large Explications writ upon it to supply that *less clearness* of expressing which the way of *writing* is necessarily subject to, if compar'd with that of *speaking*: much less if *daily practise* go along with *living voice* to declare mens minds, as is found in *Tradition*.

As for what he adds, and builds on, that *Scripture may be known to be the word of God*: If he means it may be *known* to be *such* according to the Grounds he proceeds on, he ought either to have put it amongst *Principles agreed on by both sides*, or else have *prov'd it*; which he no where attempts, but afterwards (Princ. 15.) very solidly and learnedly disproves and confutes: while he denies *the necessity of any Infallible Society of men to attest or explain those VVritings*; For, since in the bare Letter *as it lies*, there are found many passages which *contradict* one another, and, abstracting from all *Interpretation* and *Attestation* of the Letter, no part of it is to be held truer than other (for if it once lose the repute of being *Gods word*, as in that case it must, 'tis all equally liable to be false) it follows that if there be neither any men *Infallible* in *attesting* nor in *explaining* those Writings, all the World *may be deceiv'd* in performing both those duties; and, so, all Mankind may be deceived both in judging the Scriptures which we now have to be the *same* book which was writ at first, since there is no *INFALLI-*

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BLE Attestation of it, and also *may be deceiv'd* in judging there are not Contradictions in it, since there is no *Infallible Explanation* of it to secure it from many such Imputations, Evident in the bare Letter taking it as *unexplain'd* or *uninterpreted*. Any man of reason would think that to leave Scripture in such a pickle, were but a slender provision to give it such a Certainty as will fit it to be *a Rule of Faith*, if he but reflects that that *Rule* must be the *Basis* of all our Knowledg that God ever reveal'd any thing at all; that is, of all Mankinds way to salvation.

But suppose it *thus* granted that *the will of God can be sufficienty declared to Men by writing*, in the manner declared above, let's see what follows.

II. *It is agreed among all Christians that although God in the first Ages of the World did reveal his mind to men immediately by a voice or secret inspirations, yet afterwards he did communicate his mind to some immediatly inspir'd to write his Will in Books to be preserv'd for the benefit of future Ages, and particularly that these Books of the New Testament which we now receive were so written by the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus Christ.*

This is granted: only it is not *agreed among all* that bear the name of *Christians* of what nature this *benefit* is which God intended men in future Ages by the Scriptures, whether of strengthening

ſtrengthening them in Faith, and ſtirring them up to good Life, or teaching them their Faith at firſt and *aſſuring* it to them nor how this *benefit* comes to be *deriv'd* to the Generality, whether by Immediate *reading* and penetrating it *themſelves*: or, through the *Preaching* and *Inſtruction* of ſome *others* deputed by God for that end, who have Faith in their hearts already by ſome other Means: But we are to expect Dr. *St.* will in the proceſs of his diſcourſe clear this point ſolidly and throughly, for 'tis the main hinge of all this Controveeſie: He goes forward thus.

12. *Such Writings have been received by the Chriſtian Church of the firſt Ages, as Divine and Infallible, and being deliver'd down as ſuch to us by an Univerſal conſent of all Ages ſince, they ought to be owned by us as the Certain Rule of Faith; whereby we are to judge what the Will of God is in order to our ſalvation; unleſs it appear with an Evidence equal to that whereby we believe thoſe Books to be the Word of God, that they were never intended for that end becauſe of their obſcurity or Imperfection.*

This whole Paragraph amounts to one Propoſition, which is this, *ſuch Writings*, (viz. *penn'd by men divinely inſpir'd for the benefit of future Ages*) receiv'd at firſt, *and deliver'd down ever ſince as Divine and Infallible, are to be held the Certain Rule of Faith, unleſs there*

be Evidence of their Defectiveneſs, equal to that of their being Gods Word. Which is a bare *Aſſertion*, neither prov'd from any Principle *agreed* or *not agreed* on, and therefore perfectly *Groundleſs*, and *unprov'd*; and *Falſe* into the bargain, though the main ſtreſs of his whole diſcourſe relies on it. Now that 'tis *Falſe* I prove, becauſe its Contradictory is True. For, *there may be writings penn'd by men Divinely inſpir'd and deliver'd down to us as Divine and Infallible, and yet we need not be bound to hold them the Rule of Faith, though we have not equal Evidence of their defect as we have that they are the VVord of God.* Since to be *writ by men divinely-inſpir'd*, to be *Divine, Infallible*, and the *word of God*, ſignifies no more but that they are perfectly *Holy* and *True* in themſelves, and *beneficial* to mankind in *ſome* way or *other*; and this is the fartheſt theſe words will carry; but that they are of themſelves of ſufficient *Clearneſs* to give ſincerely-endeavouring perſons *ſuch Security* of their Faith while they rely on them as *cannot conſiſt with Error* (which is requiſit to the *Rule of Faith*) theſe words ſignifie *not*: They may be moſt *Holy*, they may be moſt *True in themſelves*, they may be exceedingly *Uſeful* or Beneficial to mankind, and yet not be endow'd with *this* Property, which yet the *RULE OF FAITH muſt* have. And whereas he ſays *they are* for theſe reaſons *to be own-*

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ed for the Rule of Faith (that is we are for these reasons to *judge* and *profess* them such) unless it *appear with an equal evidence, &c.* that they are defective; sure he never understood what *Judging* and *Professing* is built on, who can make such a Discourse: Our *Assent* or *Judgment* is built on the *Grounds* or *Reasons* which *conclude* the thing to *be* as we *judg*, and not on our seeing nothing to the contrary: for, in case the reasons produc'd *conclude not* the thing to *be so*, the *not appearing to be otherwise* will avail nothing *to conclude* it *so*: All it can effect is to make us maintain our liberty of suspence and Indifferency that so we may be void of forestalment or prejudice and free to believe it when competent or conclusive Reasons shall appear to evince it. What then Dr. *St.* is to do, is to produce Conclusive Reasons to evince that the Letter of Scripture has such a *perspicuity* and *other* Perfections belonging to *such* a Rule as must ground that *most Firm, Unalterable* and (if rightly grounded) *Inerrable* Assent call'd *CHRISTIAN FAITH*, and this considering the *Nature* of Faith, the *Effects* which are to proceed from Faith, and *Obligations* issuing from it, and *Incumbent* on the *Faithful*, as such; But in stead of performing this necessary Duty of his, to argue as if, though the Reasons he brings conclude it not, yet it must needs *be so* because we have no Evidence 'tis *not so*, is,

ſo pleaſant and new invented a way of arguing, that he muſt find the *World* a new *Logick*, and *Mankind* it ſelf a new *nature* ere he will arrive by means of *ſuch* Diſcourſe at *any* Concluſion.

And, whereas he ſeems to build much on the word [*Equal*,] alledging that we muſt, for the reaſons there given, hold the Scriptures the *Rule of Faith* unleſs it appear they are defective *with an Evidence* [Equal] *to that whereby we believe thoſe books to be the word of God*: 'Tis abſolutely deny'd, not only for the reaſon lately given in common, that, *none* can be bound in reaſon to *hold* or *own* any *unprov'd* Poſition; but particularly becauſe of the *peculiar* nature of the thing we are diſcourſing of; For, *the Rule of Faith* being that which is to tell us God ſaid ſuch or ſuch things, or engages the *Divine Authority* for their Verity, if we ſhould happen to miſuſe Scriptures Letter, by letting looſe people of all capacities to rely on it as their Rule of Faith, then, in caſe it ſhould peradventure not have been intended by God for this end, but for ſome others, we expoſe our ſelves and others to the deſperate danger of running into *Endleſs Errors* by this miſuſage of Scripture, and of adhering to thoſe Errors *as firmly* as if God himſelf had ſpoke them; that is, we hazard erring *irrecoverably* in matters which are the proper means of ſalvation, and blaſpheming God daily in making him the Patron of Lies. In *this* caſe then there

there is *particular caution* to be uſed, and ſo, if upon ſincere and ſtrict Examination it be but any thing *dubious* that Scripture was never intended by God for *a Rule of Faith*, we can never be obliged to hold or *own* it for ſuch, eſpecially not having any *Certain* Argument to *conclude* it ſuch; much leſs muſt we be oblig'd to hold it to be ſuch unleſs we have *EQUAL Evidence* of its Unfitneſs *to that whereby we believe thoſe Books to be the word of God*, unleſs Dr. *St.* will ſay that nothing ought to reſtrain a man from hazarding the *greateſt miſchiefs* in the world but *perfect Evidence*, that no harm will come of it. So that ſtill his main buſineſs, and without which he does nothing at all, remains yet to be done; which is, to bring ſolid convincing Proofs that God intended *Scripture*, or his Written Word for the *Rule of Faith*; that is, for ſuch a *Rule* as people of all ſorts relying on it ſhould be Infallibly or abſolutely-ſecur'd from Error by ſo doing. In making good which concerning Point he hath hitherto trifled exceedingly. Nay himſelf here is afraid to own the Goodneſs of his own Proof; otherwiſe he would never have thought it fit to annex thoſe words, *Unleſs it appear with an Evidence equal to that whereby we believe thoſe books to be the word of God, that they were never intended for that End becauſe of their obſcurity or imperfection.* For, the Evidence where-

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by it appears those Books are the word of God must be *concluſive* (else according to his Grounds, we can never *conclude* one word of Faith *True*) and so an Evidence *equal* to it must be *Concluſive* likewise: If then he had thought his reasons to prove Scripture the Rule of Faith were Good and Concluſive, Common sense would have forbid him to add these cautious words *Unleſs it appears with an equal evidence, &c.* for Common sense tells us no Concluſive reason can possibly be brought for the *Negative*, if Concluſive Reasons be once produc'd, or be producible for the *Affirmative*; *It* appears then by this behaviour of his on this occasion that he distrusts that either he *has* produc'd any *Concluſive* reason for that main Point of Scriptures being intended for *the Rule of Faith*, or that any *can* be produc'd.

Lastly, That we may give perfect satisfaction to this Fundamental Principle of his, though perhaps there is not Evidence Scriptures Letter was never intended for the Rule of Faith *equal* to that whereby we believe those Books to be the Word of God, in regard we believe this upon the Authority of *Gods Church* which is supported with the *whole* strength of *Best Nature* and *Supernaturals*, yet we have rigorous and Concluſive Evidence that it is not penn'd in the very best way imaginable to avoid all ambiguity of words

words and foreſtall miſtakes, as being *immediately* inſpir'd by God, whoſe works are *perfect*, if it had been *intended* by him to be our *Rule of Faith*, it ought to be. And I ſhall preſume I have already brought *Concluſive* Evidences both *à priori* and alſo *à poſteriori* in my anſwer to his 10*th* Principle to evince that it has not in it the nature of ſuch a Rule, nor conſequently was it *intended* by God to *be* ſuch a Rule. How incomparably excellent ſoever it be for *other* Ends for which it was indeed and ſolely intended. But omitting all the reſt at preſent, I remind him of one (which I cannot too often repeat) and enforce it upon him thus. He cannot deny but the Points of a *Trinity*, and *Chriſt's Godhead* are moſt *Fundamental* Points of Faith, he cannot deny but both Proteſtants and Socinians rely on the Letter of Scripture for the *ſole* Rule of their Faith, and *ſincerely endeavour to know the meaning of them*, which is all he requires on the Perſons ſide: He cannot deny but that, notwithſtanding this, one party holds There is *no* Trinity, and that Chriſt is *not* God, the other that there *is* a Trinity, and that Chriſt *is* God, and ſo *one* ſide erres *moſt Fundamentally*: He cannot deny but, *Error* being a *Defect*, there muſt be a *fault* ſomewhere to beget this Error, that is, either in the *Perſons* judging of *what* the Rule of Faith tells them, or elſe in judging *that* to be a Rule which *is not* the

Rule;

Rule; for in case they erre in neither of these, 'tis impossible they should erre or misconceive at all in matters of Faith. He cannot deny in any reason, but the persons on both sides being such acute men and excellently well vers'd in the Letter of Scripture have both Capacity *enough*, and *apply* that Capacity to their power by as great a Diligence as any; nor can he in Charity deny but they *sincerely endeavour to know the meaning of it in such points*. Therefore he cannot deny but the persons *attending* to the Rule *are faultless* either in understanding Scripture in these points, if it be to private Understandings *clearly* intelligible, or *Will* to understand it if they *could*; and indeed 'tis Incredible they should not *will* or *desire* this, since they use such exact diligence in it, and solemnly profess to rely on the Letter alone, or that did they indeed *sleight* the Letter or purposely decline relying on it, their byas should not *manifestly* appear in so long time, and they be branded for Evident Insincerity: He cannot deny then but the Persons are faultless as to their Capacity and Will to *understand* the *Rule*; therefore, unless he will renounce his Reason, he cannot deny but the Fault must be in the same Persons, judging *that* to be *the Rule*, which *is not*; and consequently that the Letter of Scripture is not alone and *of it self* clear and *Intelligible* enough to preserve private men, both

&c.

capable and *diligent* and *relying* ſolely on It from poſſibility of Error, no not from *actually Erring* in moſt *Fundamental* Points of *Faith*, nor conſequently has it in it the *true nature* of the *Rule of Faith*, and ſo, ſince God never intends any thing *ſhould* do what its Nature reaches *not* to do, that is *ſhould do* what it *cannot do*, 'tis manifeſt Scriptures Letter was never intended by God for that End, or to be ſuch a Rule.

13. *Although we cannot argue againſt any particular way of Revelation from the neceſſary Attributes of God, yet ſuch a way as writing being made choice of by him, we may juſtly ſay, that it is repugnant to the nature of the deſign, and the Wiſdome and Goodneſs of God, to give infallible aſſurance to perſons in writing his Will, for the benefit of Mankind, if thoſe Writings may not be underſtood by all perſons who ſincerely endeavour to know the meaning of them in all ſuch things as are neceſſary for their ſalvation.*

It is not yet prov'd, nor ever will, that God hath *made choice* of the Way of *writing* for a *Rule of Faith*, nor *deſign'd* it for that end, nor that the *benefit* he meant *Mankind* by ſuch Writings was to Ground their Faith on what appear'd to their private Judgments to be the ſenſe of the Letter; therefore 'tis no wonder if all perſons ſhould hap to *miſunderſtand*

it even in *such things as are neeeſſary for their ſalvation*, notwithſtanding their *ſincere endeavour to know the meaning of them*, ſince God has never promis'd that any who takes a *way* never intended by him for ſuch an *End*, ſhall infallibly arrive at that *End* by *ſuch* a *Way*; nor is the Wiſdome and Godneſs of God at all concern'd in preſerving any from Error if they take *ſuch* a Way, eſpecially if we reflect upon theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, That God hath no where engaged his word to ſecure every ſingle or private man from Error who ſhall ſincerely endeavour to find his Faith in the Scripture, in caſe he rely on his own *private* Judgment & neglect to *hear* his *Paſtors*: whence if ſuch private perſons rely on Gods promis'd Aſſiſtance to ſuch an End, they rely on what neither *is*, nor ever *was*, and ſo no wonder their hopes *fail* them, if thoſe Hopes be *groundleſs*.

Secondly, They cannot but know, if but meanly vers'd in the world; that whole Bodies of men, and amongſt them divers of great learning, interpret Scripture ſeveral ways in very concerning points of Faith, and it muſt needs favour of a proud ſelf-conceit in any perſon to think God regards his *ſingle ſelf* more than he does *whole Bodies* and Great Multitudes.

Again, it cannot without a ſtrange Unreaſonableneſs & Uncharitableneſs be imagin'd

or judg'd that not one person of those many who adhere to the opposite Tenet as clear to them in Scripture according to their best Judgment, does *sincerely endeavour* to know the meaning of these Sacred Books; and, if they *do*, then Common sense tells this private person that the *whole* Foundation on which his Hope is built, is *unsound*; and that *more* is requisite than the *Letter of Scripture* and a *sincere endeavour* to understand it; and that if *these* suffice to direct *him* right, they ought for the same reason be sufficient to direct *another*; and so he ought to *doubt* whether *himself* or those *others* proceeding on the same Grounds and having the *same* Means, be in the *right*, that is, he ought to doubt of his Faith no better grounded.

Lastly, This private man belongs to some particular *Church*, and so has *Pastors* and *Governors* set over him to *teach* and *instruct* him, and those too (as we'l suppose) *read* and *rely* on the Scriptures; Also, he must judg this Church *sincerely endeavours to know the meaning of Scriptures*; for this being the requisit condition to find right Faith, without this his Church has *no* right Faith, and so is *no Church*: now for a *private* man who is subject to *such* a Church, and *ought* to be *taught* by the Pastors of that Church, not to submit to the Judgment of that Church and his Lawful Pastors, as to the Sense of Scri-

ptures or his *Faith*, even though they be *sincere endeavours* as well as he, but to adhere to that for his Faith which appears to *his private self* to be in the Scriptures, though he *contradict* and *defy* all the Church he his a member of in so doing (which he ought to do, if he proceed on this Principle that *Scriptures may be understood by all persons who sincerely endeavour to know the meaning of them in all things necessary for his salvation*, for he ought not for any mans sake relinquish his Faith or its Rule.) I say, to behave himself *thus*, as in that supposition he *ought*, is such an intollerable, manifest Presumption, so Senseless and Unnatural and Self-condemning a Rebellion, and such a Fanatick Spiritual Pride, as I much doubt will give a man but small title to hope for Especial Assistance from Gods Wisdom and Goodness,

At present I onely remarke the Faults of this Principle which are these. First, That it supposes God has made *choice of*, or *designd* the *Scriptures* to be this *Rule of Faith* for private persons. Next, that Gods Wisdome and Goodness is *Engag'd* that it be thus Intelligible to *every sincere Endeavourer*! Neither of which is in the least prov'd or proveable. Lastly, when he comes to the close; instead of making it so intelligible as that all sincere Endeavors might therby be *absolutely secur'd* from erring as to the *Truth* of their *Faith*,

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(which is the Duty of the Rule of Faith) seeing very well these slight Grounds were not able to carry so far, he substitutes in their room these waty words [*in all such things as shall be necessary for their salvation*] so that though they *erre* in all the main points of Christianity, yet for any thing we know, or these crafty *common* words inform us, they have still *all* that is needfull to save them, that is though they *go wrong* all their lives they are still all the while *in the way* to Heaven. But, I suppose Dr. *St.* means that no more is necessary for any ones salvation than just as much as he can understand in Scripture. *Which* I wish he would once begin to set himself to prove & make out by some convincing argument: I am heartily weary of speaking still to his unprov'd and voluntary Assertions.

14. *To suppose the Books so written to be imperfect, i. e. that any things necessary to be believed, or practised are not contained in them, is either to charge the first Author of them with fraud, and not delivering his whole mind, or the Writers with Insincerity in not setting it down, and the whole Christian Church of the first Ages with folly, in believing the Fulness and Perfection of the Scriptures in order to salvation.*

As far as I apprehend, the foregoing Principle

ple was intended to shew that Scripture was sufficirntly *Intelligible* to be *the Rule of Faith*, and this under examination is to prove it to be the *measure of Faith* as he calls it, *Princ.* 28. and all he contends here is that it *CONTAINS all that is necessary TO BE BELIEV'D and practic'd*. And, that we may not multiply disputes, I grant those Holy Books *contain* all he pretends, some way or other either *Implicitly* or *Explicitly*; either in *Expres't words*, or by *necessary consequence*. But, that those Books *contain*, or *signifie* (for they are the same) all that is to be believed and practiced, so evidently that *all persons who sincerely endeavor to know their meaning*, and this for all future Ages, may thence *alone* (as his discourse aims to evince) that is, without the Churches interpretation, arrive to know *what's necessary for their salvation*, with such a Certainty as is requisite for the *Nature and Ends* of Faith, and the Obligations annext to it, I absolutely deny, and if he means *this* by the word [*Perfection*] which he adds to [*Fulness*] I deny also that either the first Author can be charg'd with *Fraud*, since he promis'd no such thing; or the Writers with *Insincerity*, since they were not commanded, nor did intend thus to express it; nor, as far as appears, had any order from God to *set down his whole mind*, but only writ the several pieces of it occasionally: nor did the *Christi-*

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an Church in the first Ages, ever attribute to Scriptures such an Intelligibleness as that *private* persons should ground their Faith upon their Evidence without needing the *Churches* Interpretation, if we speak of *all* points necessary to Mankinds salvation, as he seems and ought to do. And here I desire to enter this declaration to all the world, that I attribute not the *least* Imperfection to the *Holy Scriptures*; Every thing has *all* the Perfection it *ought* to have, if it *can do* what it was *intended* to do, and in the *manner* it was Intended. Treatises of deep Philosophy are not Imperfect, if they be not as plain, as plainest Narrative Histories; no not if they be *ita editi ut non sint editi*, in case they were meant as a matter for the Author to explain and dilate upon to his Scholars; nor are the *Laws* Imperfect, though they often need Learned Judges to *interpret* them. Nor are we to expect that the *Prophecy* of *Isaiah* should be as plain as the *Law* of *Moses*. The Immediate End of writing each piece, as far as appears to us, was occasional, *St. Pauls* Epistles were evidently *so*; nor can I doubt but they were perfect in their kind, and apt to signify competently to those to whom he writ what he intended; so that, if they had any *farther* doubt, they might send to ask him, or do it *viva voce*; and yet we see that even in those days when the complexion of all the Circumstances

stances was *fresher* and *nearer* then *now*, some *unlearned* persons err'd *damnably* in mistaking and misconceiving them, that is, while they went about to frame their Faith out of them; 'Tis questionless also they rely'd upon them as *Gods Word*, or dictated by the *Holy Ghost*, else they had not *so* built upon them, or adher'd *to* them. They might sincerely endeavour too to know their meaning; yet, if the Writings were disproportion'd to their pitch they migh Erre damnably for all that. What farther End God intended the H. Scriptures for, appears not by any Expresse either promise or declaration of our Saviour; but out of the knowledge that they were writ by persons *divinely inspir'd* and the Experience the Church had of their *Usefulness* towards Instruction and Good Life, joyn'd with the Common Knowledg we have that all Goods that come to the Church, happen through the ordering of Gods Providence, hence we justly conclude (as Dr. *St.* well says) that they were intended and writ also *for the Benefit of future Ages*. And from their *Usefulness* and the *success* of their Use, we may gather *how* God intended them for the Church. The *Learned* and *stable* sons of the Church read them with much fruit to excite the*ir* wills to *Goodness*. The Pastors of the Church make excellent use of them in exhorting, preaching, catechising, &c. and in many other uses of

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this sort they are excellently beneficial, which are so many that were it now seasonable for me to lay them open at large as I truly hold them, none would think I had little Reverence for Scriptures; but in deciding Controversies, or finally silencing Hereticks, as the Rule of Faith ought to do, by the unavoidable evidence of the Text to private persons no use was ever made of them (alone) with any success as the Fathers also complain; Unless the the Churches Authority, going along, animated the dead Letter in dogmatical passages, and shew'd the sense of the places to have been perpetually held from the beginning, and so gave it the Sense, Majesty Authority and Force of *Gods VVord*, elevating it thus above the repute of being some private Conceit or Production of Skill and Wit interpreting the Letter. Scripture then is *perfect*, or has *all* due to the nature God intended it; if, duly made use of as the Churches best Instrument, it be able to work those Effects spoken of, though it be not so Evident or self-authoriz'd as to be *the Rule of Faith*. We give it absolute Pre-eminence *in its kind*, that is, above all other Writings that ever appear'd in the world; but we prefer before it *Tradition* or Gods *Church*, which is the *Spouse* of *Christ*, the *Pillar and Ground of Truth*, and consisting of the *Living Temples of the H. Ghost*, for whose sole Good, as its *Final End*, Scripture it self was *intended* and written.

15. *These Writings being owned as containing in them the whole Will of God so plainly reveal'd, that no sober enquirer can miss of what is necessary for salvation; there can be no necessity supposed of any Infallible Society of men either to attest or explain these Writings among Christians, any more than there was for some Ages before Christ of such a Body of men among the Jews, to attest or explain to them the Writings of Moses or the Prophets.*

He that *owns* this, must *own* it without reason for any thing appears yet; for Dr. *St.* has afforded us hitherto nothing to prove this point but a few words craftily laid together, which, when look'd into, have not a jot of reason in them. And the like empty inside we find in this present Principle. For, if the *whole will of God be plainly reveal'd* in Scripture, then in case nothing else be requisit to understand *Gods* will but the disposition of *soberly enquiring* (as he puts no other) it must follow that *no* sober Enquirer can miss of knowing there the *whole will of God*; and since every Article of Faith is *part of Gods Will*, it would follow hence that *every sober Enquirer* may understand *all Faith* in Scripture, which yet the Dr. is not dispos'd to say; as appears by his avoiding to put down what the tenour of his discourse requir'd, namely, that *the whole*

whole will of God is so plainly reveal'd in Scripture that no sober Enquirer can miss [*of knowing his whole will there*;] and instead of it substituting, that *the whole will of God is so plainly reveal'd* in Scripture, that, *no sober Inquirer can miss of* [*what is necessary for salvation*] which words may be true though they fall *far short* of knowing the *whole* will of God by that means.

Next, it is very material, and it would be very requisite to know *how* a man must be qualify'd to be a *sober Enquirer*. In order to which, we may reflect that (as was said before) it ought in reason be judged *Gods will* that we should know whether Christ be God, and whether his Body (and consequently Himself) be *really* in the Sacrament; lest we either want the best Incitements to Devotion if he *be*, and we judg he *is not*; or else commit material Idolatry by judging him to *be so*, when he is *not* so. Now I would have him clearly show (*clearly*, I say, for all depends upon it, according to his Grounds) in what either the *Roman*-Catholicks or the Socinians fall short in point of being *sober enquirers*; for 'tis plain they must both fall short of being such if the *whole will of God be clearly reveal'd in Scripture*, since the former holds Christ is *really* in the Sacrament; the other, that he is not God, the contrary to both which I suppose Dr. *St.* holds to be the true sense of Scripture.

Farther, if there can be *no* neceſſity of any *Infallible* ſociety of men either to atteſt or explain thoſe Writings, 'tis Evident there can be no need of a *Fallible* ſociety of men for thoſe Ends. For if Writings which are *atteſted* or *explained* by a *Fallible* Society of men be the *Rule of Faith*, or the Grounds God has left us to build our Faith on, and it be evident that a Fallible Atteſtation or Explication may poſſibly lead us into nothing but Errour, it would follow that God himſelf *may* poſſibly have led all Chriſtians *hitherto* and ſtill *leads* them to the end of the world into *actual* Errour; ſince a reliance on *Fallible* means of knowing the Letter and Senſe cannot poſſibly raiſe any Aſſent beyond poſſibility of being Erroneous. There needs therefore by Dr. S*t*'s diſcourſe neither *Infallible* nor *Fallible* Societies; and ſo according to his Principles, farewell *all* Church, both *Catholick* and *Proteſtant*, as far as concerns theſe two main Duties, on which all elſe depends.

Again, though all this were true, and that *the Scriptures were own'd as containing in them the whole Will of God ſo plainly reveal'd that no ſober Enquirer can miſs of what's neceſſary to ſalvation*, and that therefore there needed no Church to *explain* them. Yet 'tis a ſtrange Conſequence that therefore *there can be no neceſſity of any Infallible ſociety* of men to *ATTEST*, them, or to witneſs that the *Letter* of

of Scripture is *right*. This is so far from *following* out of the former part of his Discourse that the *contrary* ought to follow; or, from prejudicing his own pretence, that it conduces exceedingly to it; for, certainly, his *sober Enquirer* would *less* be in doubt to *miss of what is necessary to salvation* in case the Letter, on which all depends be *well* attested, than if it be *not*, and most certainly an Infallible society of men can *better* attest that Letter than a *Fallible* one, and those Writings can with better show of reason be *owned* to *contain* in them the *Will of God*, if their Letter be attested beyond possibility of being wrong, than if *left* in a possibility of being *such*; for if the *Letter* be wrong, *all* is wrong in this case. It might seem wonderful then what it is that thus byasses Dr. *St.* against his own Interest; And I wish I had reason to think it were not a kind of Innate Antipathy against not onely *our* Church but *Church* in Common, and a desire to attribute as little to it as he can possibly though he hazzard some prejudice to his own Cause and even *all* Christian Faith into the bargain. His whole way of discourse here bends strongly towards the taking away all *divine* Institution of Pastors (for this would oblige the people to *hear* them) and levelling all into a Fanatick Anarchy. I would gladly interpret him otherwise; and imagine that perhaps he means that, since 'tis *own'd* the

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Scriptures thus *contain Gods will*, therefore there needs not be *supposed* any Infallible society of men either to attest or explain them; but I cannot conceive he should think Scriptures Letter must be *own'd* to be right without some either *Fallible* or *Infallible* Authority to attest it to be such; or that, however he may sceptically dread no Authority can be Infallible, yet that he will deny but that it were *good* there were such an Authority to *attest* Scriptures Letter, nay *needful* too in case he heartily held that Christian Faith built (according to his Grounds) solely on that Letter may not possibly all be a *Ly*; which common sense tells us, it *may be*, in case we may all be deceiv'd in the *Truth* of the *Letter*.

Lastly, That *for some Ages before Christ there was no Necessity of such a Body of men among the Jews to attest or explain to them the Writings of Moses and the Prophets*, is first not prov'd, and yet Dr. *St.* builds upon it as confidently as if it were evidently concluded, or else Self-evident. Next, what mean those words [*for some Ages before Christ*?] If the *whole* time of the Mosaical Law; then 'tis evidently false, since (*Deut.* 17. *v.* 10, 11. &c.) God commanded upon pain of death to do according as some persons he had appointed for that end should explain the Writings belonging to that Law; and if these men had not some way or other been secured from Errour,

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God by commanding the subject Laity under so heavy a penalty to act as they adjudg'd, had both *led* them into *actual Errour*, and punisht them thus grievously in that case for *adhering to Truth*; which are too horrid blasphemies to be heard or imagin'd. But, if they mean onely, for *some time* of that Law, or *some* Ages immediately *before Christ* when the Synagogue was most corrupt, this implies a Confession that such a Society was *necessary* in the Ages *foregoing*; and then Dr. *St.* is to show us why it was not *equally* necessary in the *later* as in the *former*, and not suppose it *gratis*. Nor was the Synagogue ever more corrupt than in our Saviour's days, and yet we see how severely he enjoins the Jews of that time to obey the Scribes and Pharisees because they *sate in Moses his Chair*; which it were blasphemy to say Christ could do, if he had not secur'd their Doctrine from being Erroneous, that is, preserv'd them Inerrable in that Affair. Add, that were all granted, yet there is far *more* necessity of explaining the Scriptures now, than at *that* time: For the Law was in a manner all of it, either matters of *Fact* to be done, or *Moral* Duties and so agreeable to nature; whence *both* of these were far more easily expressible in proper language, and consequently Intelligible, than the sublime, spiritual and mysterious Tenets of the Law of Grace; which are more hard to be expresst in

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per words; and being more removed from our knowledg, the natures of the Things are more hard to be penetrated, and ſo thoſe words more difficult to be rightly comprehended and underſtood without an Interpreter, than were thoſe other.

16. *There can be no more intolerable uſurpation upon the Faith of* Chriſtians *than for any perſon or ſociety of men to pretend to an Aſſiſtance as Infallible in what they propoſe as was in Chriſt or his Apoſtles without giving an equal degree of Evidence that they are ſo aſſiſted as Chriſt and his Apoſtles did; viz. by miracles as great publick and convincing as theirs were; by which I mean ſuch as are wrought by thoſe very perſons who challenge this Infallibility, and with a deſign for the Conviction of thoſe who do not believe it.*

Thus the Dr. makes *ſure* work againſt the Infallibility of any Church; which overthrown, his *ſingle ſelf* nay any *private* man or woman that has but ſelf-conceit and confidence enough to proceed openly upon theſe Principles of his, is *upon even ground* with the beſt nay *all* the Churches in the World at the main point of underſtanding and determining what's Faith, what not: Nay more, may defie all the Governours of all Churches in the World, if he or ſhe be but conſcious to themſelves

ſelves that they *ſincerely endeavour* and *ſoberly enquire* for the true meaning of the divine writings; for theſe being their Rule of Faith, and being aſſured by Dr. *St.* that they cannot miſs, if they *ſoberly enquire*, of what is neceſſary for ſalvation, and being inform'd by common Reaſon that 'tis a point very neceſſary to the ſalvation of a Chriſtian, or one who is to follow and adore Chriſt, to know whether he be God, and ſo may without fear of Idolatry have Divine Honour given him or no; theſe things being ſo, in caſe it ſhould ſeem to the beſt judgement of *ſuch* a man (and let him be, for example, one brought up in the Church of *England* and newly turn'd Socinian) that Chriſt is *not* God, he ought not to relinquiſh his *Rule of Faith* at any rate, nor what he judges the Scriptures ſenſe of it (this being his *Faith*) but maintain it boldly againſt all his Paſtors; talk, and quote Scripture as briskly as the beſt of them all; defy them to their faces, nay, dye in defence of his interpretation of it, and be a ſpecial Martyr though he take his death upon it, that all his lawful Paſtors and the whole Church of which he is a member, are moſt hainous Idolaters for giving the worſhip *proper to God*, to a *man*. In this caſe 'tis plain, the Church cannot pretend to oblige him to *believe* her interpretation of Scripture; Alas! all ſuch power is quite taken out of *her* hands by

these new principles; nor to *act exteriourly* as she does; for that were to oblige him to *deny* his Faith in his *Actions* and carriage, and this in so hainous a point as committing flat Idolatry, and which his Rule of Faith tells him is such. Nor to acquiesce so far as to hold his tongue and not contradict the Church; for 'tis both *ingratitude* to God who has so *plainly reveal'd* it to him in Scripture, not to stand up for his honour so wickedly violated by the Church; and withall most *uncharitable* to his neighbour not to communicate to him the light he has receiv'd by such *plain Revelation from God's word*, and to endeavour his reducement from so grievous an Idolatry, especially if this man be a Minister of the Church of *England*, whose Office and Duty 'tis to hold forth or preach what he judges God's word: Nay, though it were a Lay-man or a Lay-woman, all's a case; why may they not with as much reason make known so concerning a truth *plainly reveal'd* to them, as *Aquila* and *Priscilla* did of old. As for all power of the Church to restrain them that's quite thrown out of doors. Humane commands can have no force when the *best* duties to God and man are neglected by obeying; and the more the Church is obstinate and opposes this private man or woman, by so much *greater* is the *necessity* of his (or her) informing the Church

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right, and standing up for the Truth.

Hereafter more of this: at present let us see how he destroyes infallibility in the Church, which is his chief design, and indeed it makes very much for his purpose; for I so far concurr with him, that if it be but fallible in *attesting* or *explaining* Scripture, 'tis little available to the grounding Christian Faith, so that if infallibility be but overthrown and these Principles setled in its stead, every private man is a *Church*; which (our corrupt nature loving liberty) will no doubt be very taking, and please the rabble exceedingly. He is so earnest at his work that he stumbles for haste. For, first, who did ever pretend to an infallibility *equal* to what was in Christ or his Apostles, as his words import? Christ was *essentially* infallible; the Apostles by *Immediate Inspiration* from God: The Church pretends indeed to be infallibly assisted, but that she pretends to have it either *essentially* as *God* has it, or by way of *immediate inspiration*, as the *Apostles* had it, is a thing I never yet learnt. 'Tis enough to justify her constant claim of infallible assistance, that she have it *mediately*, or by means of the ordinary working of natural and supernatural causes, so shee but *have* it. And to have it *this way* seems far more agreeable to reason than the other of *immediate inspiration*, as to have by way of immediate inspiration was far more fitting for the

the *Apoſtles*; For neither was it in their dayes accepted by a *great* portion of the world that Chriſt was *God*, or his Doctrine *truth*, that ſo they might receive it tranſmitted from the foregoing divinely aſſiſted Church, that theſe and theſe doctrines were *His*, but they were the *Firſt* that were to propagate this doctrine; and publiſh and make out the Truth of it: nor could their *own* teſtimony avail to the end intended; for what could they teſtify? That Chriſt ſaid *thus*, and did *ſuch* and *ſuch* miracles to teſtify the *truth* of his doctrine, or that the H. Ghoſt inſpir'd them? The later was *latent*, and the hearers had but their own words for it; the other was *patent* indeed, and ſo fully Convictive to thoſe who knew and convers'd with them, and were acquainted with the Circumſtances, but to *remote* nations, whither two or three of them were to go and Preach, it ſignifi'd little, and depended upon their bare words. Hence Miracles were at firſt (and ſhall till the end of the world in like caſes be) abſolutely neceſſary, to make ſuch unheard of Tenets enter and ſink into the hearts of great multitudes how circumſtanc't ſoever. But, when afterwards a World, or vaſt Body of men were by thoſe Extraordinary Means ſettled unanimouſly in a firm beleif that Chriſt was God, or at leaſt that his doctrine was true, there could need no more but to know it was contin-

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nu'd down all along the ſame, to make deſerters of his Church (againſt whom we diſpute at preſent) accept it; and it being viſible, audible and practical, and ſo ſubject to ſenſe; hence *Atteſtation* of the foregoing Age to the Age ſucceeding was the moſt Proper way to continue it down; and perfectly *Certain*, being now grown ſo Ample and Vaſt; and the Atteſters being *Intelligent* Perſons, and having the ſenſe of Chriſt's Law written in their heart, could deliver and explain themſelves pertinently to all ariſing difficulties, and clear all poſſible miſunderſtandings, which the dead Letter could not; and ſo this *Living rule* is perfectly *Intelligible* too. I omit here the *Supernatural* aſſiſtances, which thoſe who comprehend what moſt effectual means of Sanctity there is in the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Diſcipline of the Church, and conſequently (as appears by divers excellent effects of it) the Product alſo of thoſe means, or *Holineſs* in great multitudes of the Faithful, will ſee and acknowledge, do incomparably ſtrengthen the Authority of the Church, in delivering down right Faith.

Hence appears our Drs. unreaſonableneſs intimated to us in this principle: That though Connatural and Ordinary means be *now* laid in the world to continue Chriſt's doctrine from our time forwards, and *were laid* in the firſt

Age to continue it along hitherto: Though Common Reason and (as I remember) St. *Austin* have taught him that, into the place of Miracles succeeded the consent of Countries & Nations; though Mr. *Baxter*, whom perhaps he holds as Holy a Father, as great a Saint, and as eminent a Scholar as St. *Austin* himself, have told him in his *More Reasons for the Christian Religion*, &c. p. 32. *That humane testimony* may be so *circumstanc't as amounts to a natural infallible certainty*, instancing in the existence of King *James*, and our Laws being made by King and Parliament (which how Dr. T. his Schollar will like I know not) and so the Churches infallibility in Faith to the end of the world might descend down to us by *testimony* to have been the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, without needing *New miracles* done still to evince it: Nay, though himself in correspondency to both these Doctors, does in his *Rational account* p. 205. make Tradition *of the same use to us now which our Eyes and Ears had been, if we had been actually present when Christ delivered his Doctrine and wrought his miracles*, and so could as well certify us of the first-taught doctrine, as if we had seen and heard it, and consequently of the *Infallibility* of the Church in case that were a point of Doctrin taught at first; yet now, one of his principles must be, that no Argument

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though never ſo ſtrong and convictive, no Tradition how well qualifi'd ſoever it be, nor any Plea in the world though never ſo legal and evident, ſhall acquit the Church from a *moſt intolerable Uſurpation* if ſhe challenge Infallibility, but down right *Miracles*, full *as great* (obſerve his rigour) *publick and convincing as were thoſe of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and wrought by thoſe very perſons that challenge this infallibility, nay, and wrought with a deſign too for the conviction of thoſe who do not beleeve it.* How ſhrewdly ſure this Rome-deſtroying Principle is laid! But if one ſhould ask ſeriouſly whether a *Convincing reaſon* to prove this infallibility, I mean ſuch a one as evidently *concluded* the point, might not do *without a miracle*, I know no rational man that ever would deny his aſſent upon ſuch a condition; nor would Dr. *St.* perhaps in another occaſion; but here, oh here 'tis another caſe! His hatred againſt the Church of *Rome's* Infallibility is ſo vigorous that he profeſſes to deſy *Demonſtration* it ſelf, that is, renounce Humane Nature rather than admit it, nothing but *Miracle* with all the nice cautions imaginable ſhall ſerve the turn. A notable reſolution, and only parallel to his whom nothing would ſatisfy of the truth of Chriſtianity, but the miraculous appearance of his Angel Guardian: but the Miracle not being granted him, he dy'd an Atheiſt.

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In a word, if the Church ever *usurpt* the pretence of *Infallibility*, I hope she first invaded it at one time or other: Now, since as long ago as St. *Paul's* time she we was called by that good man *Columna & Firmamentum veritatis*, *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*; which words ill consist with a *Fallible proposer* of such truths as belong to her sphear or points of *Faith*, he ought to shew and make out when the Church *lost* that Title and preheminence; otherwise, since she is found *claiming it* now, and actually holding and possessing it upon the tenure of Tradition as promis'd her by Christ, we have very good reason to hold, she never *usurp'd* it at all, but *inherited* it by a continued line of *Succession* from the beginning of Christianity to this very day: Nor has it ever seem'd *Intolerable* to any but to those whom nothing would content but new-fangled *Innovation*, and altering the long-establish'd doctrine of Christ, deliverd down perpetually from his time.

17. *Nothing can be more absurd then to pretend the necessity of such an infallible Commission and Assistance to assure us of the truth of these writings, and to interpret them, and at the same time to prove that Commission from those writings from which we are told nothing can be certainly deduc'd such an assurance not being supposed; or to pretend that infallibility in a Body of men is not as*

at liable to doubts and disputes as in those books from whence only they derive their Infallibliity.

The first part of this Principle is granted as to the *Absurdity* of the Position, abating the *Degree* of it; for, I take it to be *equally* or *more* absurd not to assent to the Infallibilty of a great body of men (which is all that is pretended) whatever *Reason* or *Tradition* appear for it, without an *evident Miracle*. The second part is likewise granted, in case it suppose (as it seems to do) the knowledge of their Infallibility deriv'd only from those very books which they recommend, and in passages which they are to explicate, ere they can be sure of such an infallibility. Otherwise, 'tis possible a book; *obscure* in multitudes of *other* passages may be *clear* in that *one* which relates them to the Church or that body which they are to *hear* and *obey* as to the proper interpreters of the Scriptures in Dogmatical and controverted passages which belong to Faith. But the Dr. should do well to shew us any society of men or Church, that pretends to build her Infallibility only on the Scriptures interpreted by that very Infallibility. Otherwise it will not touch our Church who claimes the *Supernatural* assistance of the Holy Ghost upon her Rule of Faith, *Tradition*: and, as for her being *naturally* supported from errour in *attesting* former doctrines 'tis grounded by those who dis-

course of that point upon Humane nature as to its infallible *Sensations* and on its *Rationality*, which renders it incapable to do any thing without a *motive*, as they must do, should they transmit *a not-deliver'd*, that is, an *evidently-new* doctrine for an *old* or *deliver'd* one.

18. *There can be no hazard to any person in mistaking the meaning of any particular place in those books, supposing he use the best means for understanding them comparable to that which every one runs who beleeves any person or society of men to be infallible who are not; for in this latter he runs unavoidably into one great error, and by that may be led into a thousand; but in the former God hath promis'd either he shall not erre, or he shall not be damn'd for it.*

This whole Paragraph is built on a false and *unprov'd* supposition, *viz.* that any Adversary of his *beleeves any society of men to be Infallible which is not.* Other faults there are in it, and that good store; as, granting in effect here what he lately deny'd, that a man *using the best means for understanding Scripture may mistake the meaning of any particular place*, though not with a hazard incomparable to that of the other: whereas, if Scripture be the Rule of Faith as he contended, 'tis impossible that a man relying and proceeding upon it, and using that means in the best manner he can possibly, should come to *erre* in his Faith; for in this

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case the man having done all that can be done by him as to the understanding the *Rule*, the fault must needs be in his judging that to be a Rule which is *none*.

But this main and fundamental error is couch't in the last words; [*in the former, God hath promis'd he shall not erre, or shall not be damn'd for it*, what mean [*in the former* case, &c.] *This* certainly and nothing but *this*, if we may trust his own words; *in mistaking the meaning of any particular place in those books supposing he use the best means for understanding them:* Now 'tis a strange thing to me, that God should promise that a man *mistaking* the meaning of these books should not *erre* in so doing: But omitting this slip of Dr. *St's.* Reason or memory; I ask what means this disjunctive promise, either of *not erring* or *not being damn'd for it*? Why it means that Dr. *St.* knows not well himself what to say to the point, or whether he should stand to it or no, that a man using the *best means* for understanding Scripture, that is, according to him, the best means left by God for him to arrive at Faith, should not *erre*, and therefore he warily subjoyn'd [*or he shall not be damn'd for it*] and then he thinks himself secure enough from confute; it being a hard thing to conclude of any particular well-meaning man when he is damn'd, when not; whereas it might perhaps be no such hard mat-

ter to prove whether what he held was *true* or not.

I could ask him whence or how he comes to this assurance of God's disjunctive promise here so confidently asserted, on the truth of which the salvation of so many souls necessarily depends? Not by *Tradition*: For this would make him rely on a society of men, or a Church, which he hates with all his heart; not by *Scripture*, for this would make the same thing be the proof to it self: not by *Reason*, for we are to suppose he has done his best in that already, and yet (as is shown) has effected nothing. But I would demand of him seriously; did God ever promise that if one takes such a way as (for want of a due intelligibleness in proportion to his capacity) is *not able* to secure him from error, he shall *not* erre, or that if he will needs be wiser than his Pastors and chuse a Means for such an end which God never intended for that end, he shall yet be *sure* to arrive at that end by that means; or that, if by relying on it and erring, he shall happen to *fall short* of sufficient means, he shall notwithstanding miraculously be sav'd *without* sufficient means? These are the points he is to consider well, and speak to, and not thus *confidently* call every thing a Principle which he thinks fit to say on his own head, though never so extravagant. In a word, let him prove Scripture

ture to have in it the nature of a *Rule of Faith*, or (which will fall into the same) to have been intended by God for that end, that is, to be *of it self* such to people of *all capacities* that *soberly enquire*, as secures them from erring in Faith while they rely on it, and this *of it self* without needing any society of Men, or Church to attest or explain it, and then I shall yeild his discourse to run as currently as his own heart can wish: but in proving this, he hitherto *hath* and ever must fall short most miserably.

He hath often, as I noted formerly, instead of saying his Rule of Faith should *preserve* those who endeavour to follow it from *error* or from *missing of truth*, substituted those words, *cannot miss of what is necessary for their salvation*, and such like: The examination of which words I have reserved till now; and, that I may do him all right imaginable, I will press his Argument (or rather indeed bare saying) in behalf of Scripture as far as my reason can carry it. "*None can deny but that the knowledge* "*of a very few points are sufficient for well-mean-*"*ing particular persons, as appears by the Iewes* "*that were sav'd, and many silly and weak* "*Christians since; nor can it be deny'd but every* "*one that reads Scripture or hears it read by one* "*they dare trust, may understand some few good* "*things, to which if they live up heartily (and*

" *if they do not 'tis their own fault*) *they shall be* " *sure to be sav'd: And as for such points as a* " *Trinity, Christ's Godhead, Real Presence, and* " *such like, the knowledge of them* (*even in case* " *they are truths*) *is not of necessity to salvation,* " *since none doubts but tis, absolutely speaking,* " *possible to be sav'd without knowledge of them.* " *since many have been actually sav'd who never* " *heard of any such points.*

Having impartially said in short the best I could in Dr. *Sts.* behalf, and much more than he has said for himself; let us see now what ought to be reply'd in behalf of *Truth*. To make way to it, I premise these Maxims. 1. That according to the Ordinary course of God's Providence, men are sav'd by *means*. 2. That *All* points of Faith, are *to some degree* Means of salvation. 3. That according to the several Circumstances and Exigencies of particular persons, one needs *more* Means than another. 4. That, therefore, it must be said some have miscarry'd because they had *no more* of those means of salvation apply'd to them, who might yet have been sav'd had they *had more*. This being so, how great a presumption and madness it is to affirm that every man who reads the Scripture shall be sure to understand there so much as is *sufficient* means for *His* salvation; or motives to work up his soul to a disposition for Heaven, considering his Exigencies,

gencies, without needing the knowledge of other Points which contain other Motives ten times more forcible perhaps to move and excite him to true interior goodness? Is it not manifest, that (considering mens several capacities, which 'tis a perfect Phrenzy to think they must needs be perfectly adjusted to their spiritual necessities) one may as well say that every one who throws a Die upon a Fortune book shall most certainly light on his own Lot, as that every one who reads Scripture shall, let his exigencies be what they will, find motives sufficient for his salvation? If Dr. *St.* sayes that some *one* or *two* Points have prov'd sufficient for some *few*, therefore they might have serv'd *All* if they *would*, and that God's goodness towards Christians obliges him to no more; I reply, First, That he speaks against nature, since 'tis evident *some* temptations require *greater* Motives to overcome them than *others*, and no man can assure us, that those who have *fewest motives* shall not have the *strongest temptations*. And if it were but rightly comprehended that 'tis *Love* of God which unites us to him, and so saves us, and that 'tis for want of *this* those miscarry, who do miscarry, it would be easily understood that many excellent and incomparable motives, as the Godhead of Christ and such like are lost to weak souls, and consequently Heaven, by their not understanding

ding them; and not only ſo, but by the neceſſary connexion of truths with one another, while they miſunderſtand the Scripture, and ſo, by their holding oppoſite to ſuch great truths oppoſe in their thoughts other points of Faith, *thoſe* alſo loſe their motive force, whence their ſouls become tainted with multitudes of erroneous Maxims and Practices. Secondly, this anſwer takes away the neceſſity of all *other* points of faith but of ſuch a *few* of them only, which have hapt by the very eſpecial aſſiſtance of God's preventing and aſſiſting grace to have accidentally (as it were) ſuffic'd to have ſav'd ſome few.

If he ſayes that, proceeding on this manner, none *can hold* an error; for they are to hold nothing but what they ſee to be evidently there, and in all other things which they ſee not they are to ſuſpend. I would know what ſhould hinder them from thinking they ſee that to *be* evidently there, which is *not* evidently there; ſince 'tis acknowledg'd the vulgar or Generality are but bad judges and diſtinguiſhers of a true Evidence from a Counterfeit one; beſides, there are in the *open* Letter as it lyes, many Hereſies; and if they know theſe to be ſuch, how can they be ſure of *any* thing they read there to be *True*, ſince nothing is *plainer* in the letter than are thoſe *Hereſies*; unleſs it be ſaid that *natural* or *moral* Maxims taught

taught them theſe places are to be *literally* underſtood, and did not tell them ſo of the *other*; and then, they are beholding to thoſe Maxims and not to Scripture for their faith, ſince in that caſe *It* has taught them no more than they knew *before*. Again, may not an acute wit make out to the generality of *D. Sts.* Faithfull, that to know the meaning of Scripture right, they muſt compare one place with another; and then, by doing ſo dexterouſly, make them beleeve a thouſand Errours to be pure Scripture, and God's Word, which are not. Much more might be ſaid on this occaſion; but I only make one reflexion on this Principle, and ſo proceed.

His intent in it is to ſhew which Party runs *greater hazard*. The Adherers to Scripture us'd on his faſhion, or thoſe who *hear the Church*; and he would run us down by vertue of an unprov'd Suppoſition, that the Church is not Infallible. To offer him fair play, let us grant him all the advantages he pretends to in Scripture, and let him grant us all we pretend to ſecure us, in the Church, and then compare the *two hazards* together; nay more, let us condeſcend as much as himſelf can imagine, even ſo as to abate the Infallibility of the Church, and to grant that ſhe is *Fallible*; and yet the very light of Nature will ſtand on the ſide of *our* Faith-

full againſt *his*. For, this teaching them that Superiours are to be obey'd, and their Teachers to be heard and believ'd in things not known to be *againſt* God's Command, and experience telling them that Scripture is oft times liable to diſpute in paſſages that to both ſides ſeem clear; both Humility, Prudence, Obedience, and the due care of their Salvation and *all* Virtues that can be concern'd in this kind of action, incline them ſtrongly rather to adhere to what Perſons *wiſer then themſelves*, or their *Paſtors* conceive to be the meaning of Scripture, than to what ſeems ſo to *themſelves*, in oppoſition to the ſame Paſtors and Multitudes of other Chriſtians, who are evidently of *greater knowledge*, and, as far as they can be inform'd, of *equall ſincerity*.

19. *The Aſſiſtance which God hath promis't to thoſe who ſincerely deſire to know his will, may give them greater aſſurance of the Truth of what is contain'd in the Books of Scripture, than it is poſſible for the greateſt Infallibility in any other Perſons to do, ſuppoſing they have not ſuch aſſurance of their Infallibility.*

God hath promis't *no* Aſſiſtance that thoſe ſhould arrive at their end who take a way diſproportion'd to that end; other wiſe God

ſhould

ſhould oblige himſelf to work conſtant Miracles as oft as well-meaning people out of weakneſs ſhould act imprudently. Next, if men *deſire ſincerely* to know Gods will and be *humble* (and if they be not 'tis doubtfull their deſire is not *ſincere* as is ought) they will, as God's command, the Order of the World, and common Reaſon obliges them, be rather willing to truſt their Pastors who are better qualifi'd for ſuch Knowledge, and whom God hath ſet over them to inſtruct them, what is the ſenſe of Scriptures, than truſt their own private ſhallow judgments. And, 'tis obſervable that Dr. *St's.* diſcourſe all along concerning this point, is a plain begging the Queſtion; For, if God have left a Church and commanded the Faithfull to hear it, and conform to it's Faith, and conſequently to receive the ſenſe of Scripture as to Points of Faith from it, then there is no neceſſity of Scripture's being intended to be plain to all Capacities of it ſelf, nor of thinking men may *ſincerely deſire* to know God's will in Scriptures, and uſe due means to underſtand it, without making uſe of the Churches Judgment in that affair; upon which falſe ſuppoſition Dr. *St.* wholly builds his otherwiſe perfectly ruinous diſcourſe; Wherefore, his ſuppoſition being deny'd, I muſt reply, that thoſe who *ſincerely deſire to know Gods will*, have a certain virtue in them

called *Humility*; and this teaches them not to overween in their own opinion, but to think that their Pastors appointed by God to teach them are generally wiser then those who are to be *taught*, and that those who are *wiser* know *better* than those who are *lesse* wise. A little of this plain, honest, rational Humility would quite spoil all Dr. *St's* discourse, and convince all his Principles to be a plausible piece of Sedition and licentious presumption, tending of its own nature utterly to destroy all *Church* and *Church-Government*; and, if applied to *that* Subject, *Temporal* too.

I should be glad to know what means the word [*such*] in the last line; if he means *Infallible*, and that the Church pretending to Infallibility must have Infallible *Assurance* that she is Infallible, tis asserted by us; and his supposition that she is not, is absolutely deny'd: For the Church is Infallibly certain that Christ's promise to her shall not fail; and also Infallibly certain by constant *Tradition* and the beleef of good Christians in all Ages that Christ *has* promis'd her this Security or Immunity from *Errour* in *Faith*, none questioning it but those who have rebel'd and revolted from her.

In a word, this whole Principle is Faulty, being built on a False and unprov'd *Supposition*; and were the *Supposition* granted, and that

that the *Church* were *Fallible*, ſtill it were *falſe*, that his Faithfull would have greater Aſſurance of their Faith than *ours*, as hath been partly now ſhown, and more amply in my Reply to the foregoing Principle.

Recapitulation.

The Sum then of Dr. *St's* Performances in theſe *ten Principles* of his, which moſt Fundamentally concern his Faith, and the pretended Reduction of it to Principles, is briefly this; that he hath not brought ſo much as one ſingle Argument proving either that Scripture's Letter is *the Rule of Faith*, nor that *Tradition* or the Infallible *Teſtimony* of Gods Church is *not it*. And as for the particular *Maxims* or Sayings of his, on which he chiefly relies, they have been one by one diſprov'd, and the *oppoſite Truths* eſtabliſh't; As,

1. That Faith being ſuch an Aſſent, as when built (as it ought to be) on the means left by God for mankinde to rely ou, is impoſſible to be Falſe, and ſo that Means or the Rule of Faith being neceſſarily ſuch as while men rely upon, it is impoſſible they ſhould erre; Theſe things, I ſay, being ſo (as I have largely prov'd in *Faith Vindicated*, and the Introductory Diſcourſe to this preſent Examin) Dr. *St.* has not ſo much as

 made

made an offer or attempt, to ſhow that Scripture is the Rule of Faith.

2. That ſince 'tis agreed God can contrive *Writings* ſufficiently Intelligible for that End, or ſufficiently clear to aſcertain thoſe who rely upon them of their Faith, and yet, on the other ſide, 'tis evident God has not *de facto* done this, or contriv'd ſuch Methods and ways as our Reaſon tels us evidently, are proper means to keep thoſe Writings call'd *the Scriptures* from being thus miſ-underſtood by ſeverall Parties, even in *Fundamental* Points, as we experience they are; it follows hence moſt manifeſtly that God never intended the way of *writing* for *the Rule of Faith.*

3. Since *ſeveral* Parties of excellent capacities in underſtanding words aright, and *both* owning *Scripture* for their *Rule*, and applying themſelves with greateſt diligence to know the true ſence of it, do notwithſtanding differ in thoſe Fundamental Points of a Trinity and the God-head of Chriſt; 'tis manifeſt that *Scripture* is not able ſo ſecure thoſe who rely on it to their power of the *Truth* of their Faith, and ſo is not the Rule of Faith.

4. Again, ſince in paſſages that concern Faith the knowing whether the words be taken properly or improperly is that which determines what is Faith, what not; and

this

this knowledge is not had from Scripture, it follows, that Scripture is not the *Rule of Faith.*

5. God has no where promis'd that he will ſtill aſſiſt thoſe who ſincerely endeavour to compaſs an *end*, in caſe they take a *way diſproportion'd* to attain that end; and which way was (conſequently) never *intended* by him for ſuch an end: for this were to engage himſelf to do perpetual Miracles, whenever any one ſhould act irrationally. Wherefore, unleſs it be firſt ſolidly prov'd that *Scripture* is the *Rule of Faith*, or apt of its own nature to give thoſe who rely on it Inerrable ſecurity of the Truth of their Faith while they thus rely on it, and conſequently that it was intended by God for ſuch an end, none can juſtly lay claim to God's aſſiſtance, or tax his Juſtice or Veracity if they fall into Errour; Much leſſe, if they neglect thoſe Duties which Nature makes evident to them, and common Chriſtianity teaches, *viz.* to obey and hear their *Governours*, *Paſtors* and *Teachers* ordain'd by *God*, and rely on their own *private* Wit, or God's Immediate Aſſiſtance to *their* ſingle ſelves rather than to thoſe *Publick* Officers of the Church God had appointed to govern and direct them, for this intolerable ſpiritual Pride is ſo odious and pernicious that it moſt juſtly entitles them to deluſion, Errour, and Hereſie.

6. Hence

6. Hence, ſince God has left *ſome means* for Faith, and 'tis Blaſphemy to ſay that thoſe who rely according to their utmoſt power on the means left and Intended by God to lead Men into Truth, can, while they do ſo, run into Errour; which yet private underſtandings (as was ſeen) may, relying on the Written Word; it follows unavoidably that ſome *other* way is left (which is *not Writing*) to ſecure the Relyers on it from Errour in Faith, or to *be* to them *the Rule of Faith.*

7. *Scripture* not being the *Rule*, and *Chriſt's Doctrine* being once ſettled and accepted in the *Chriſtian* part of the World, by means of *Miracles*, there needed no more but to derive it down to future Ages; and, this Doctrine being *Practicall*, and, ſo, objected to to our Sences, Teſtimony was ſufficient to do it, ſo it were ſufficiently qualify'd, that is, the beſt and on the beſt manner ſupported that any ordinary means can be; ſuch was the *Teſtimony* of the *Church* (or *Tradition*) which, beſides what is found in humane Teſtimony, has alſo the whole body & joynt force of *ſupernaturall motives* to preſerve the Teſtifiers Attentive and Veracious.

Thus the Church or the Chriſtian Society of Men being eſtabliſh't *Infallible* in delivering down Faith, needs not prove her *Infallibility* by *Miracles*; but 'tis ſufficient the Faithfull

Faithfull beleeve that Chriſt promis't to protect her from Errour (and conſequently to beleeve the *An eſt* of her Infallibility, or *that ſhe is infallible*) upon the *ſame Rule* they beleeve all their *Faith* and the *Scriptures* too, *viz.* upon *Tradition*; and that her Controverſiall Divines who are to defend Faith, by way of Reaſon or Argument prove the *Quid eſt* of this Infallibility or make out in *what* it conſiſts or in what ſecond Cauſes this ordinary and conſtant Aſſiſtance is founded, and conſequently prove it's force by ſuch Maxims as ground the Certainty of Humane Teſtimony, and (if the Reader comprehends them) by the ſtrange efficacy of ſupernaturall motives alſo conſpiring to ſtrengthen Nature as to that effect of rightly teſtifying the Doctrine received and beleeved to be Chriſt's.

8. There is no Neceſſity then of proving this *Infallibility* meerly by Scripture interpreted by virtue of this Infallibility; Nor do the Faithfull or the Church commit a *Circle* in beleeving that the Church *is* Infallible upon *Tradition*. For firſt, taking them as Faithfull preciſely they are meerly *Beleevers* not *Reaſoners*, or ſuch as put one propoſition artificially before or after another. Next, they *beleeve* only the *ſupernaturall Infallibility* built on the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, that, is, on the Churches *Sanctity*; and this

is prov'd by the *Human* Testimony of the Church to have been ever held since the beginning, and the force of the *Human* Testimony of the Church is prov'd by Maxims of *meer Reason*. Add that the Certainty of such a vast Testimony is *self-evident practically*; in the same manner as 'tis self-evident that the Testimony of all *England* cannot deceive us in telling us there was such a man as King *James*: whence no Circle can possibly be committed, if it be beleeved for it's own sake, or rather known by its own light though there would be if discoursing it rationally we should put the same Proposition to be before and after it self.

9. Since those who have the least capacity of penetrating Scripture, and consequently (according to Dr. St.) have the *fewest* Motives of good life applyed to them may frequently live amongst *greatest* Temptations, that is, in circumstances of needing the *most*; 'Tis a blind Undertaking, and no securer nor wiser, than idle Fortune-telling, to bear men in hand that persons of all capacities who sincerely Endeavour shall understand Scripture *in all such things as are necessary for their Salvation*.

10. Since 'tis most evident that *private Judgments* may err in understanding Scripture but not evident that Christ has not promis'd his Church Security from erring in Faith

Faith, they run the greater hazard by far who rely on their *private* ſenſe of *Scripture*, then thoſe do who rely on the *Church*; eſpecially, ſince the Church *denyes not* Scripture but profeſſes to go according to it, and ſo in common reaſon is likely to comprehend its meaning far *better* than *private* men; but moſt eſpecially ſince our Moderns when they firſt began to rely on their own Judgments of Scripture for their Faith, revolted from hearing the Church, and rebell'd againſt Paſtours and lawfull Superiours, which both Gods Law and the light of Nature taught them they were to follow and ſubmit to.

Thus our new *Apoſtle of the private ſpirit* of *Gifts* and *new Light*, hath endeavour'd to pull down the Church and ſubvert the Foundation laid by Chriſt; and inſtead thereof to ſet up as many Churches as there are private and proud Fancies in the world. Each of which may by this deviliſh Doctrine defy the Church for Teaching him his Faith; or for governing him as as a Church, that is, governing him as one of the Faithfull; for ſhe can bind never a ſubject in conſcience to any thing but what her ſelf and each man judges to be True and Sound; wherefore, if any or each private perſon underſtands Scripture *another* way then ſhe does, he is

enfranchis'd by his Rule of Faith (which he ought not relinquish) from her Authority; she may in that case *wish* him *well* and *pity* him as every old wife may also do; and he in return may wish well to the Church end pity her; She may endeavour to admonish and instruct him better, so to pluck him out of his Errour; and he in requital, that he may not be behind-hand with the Church in Courtesy, may with equal nay better Title admonish the Church of her failing, and endeavour to pull her out of *her* Errour, or (as the new phrase is) *reform* her; for, being conscious to himself that he *reads* the Scripture and *sincerely indeavours to know the meaning of it*, he has all the security of his Faith, (and consequently of the Churches being in an Errour,) that may be; Nor can he being thus *gifted*, want Power to *preach* to her and others; For, certainly the World would be most *perversly* ordered, if they who are *in Errour*, should have Licence and Power to propagate their *Errours*, and those who follow *Truth* should have *no* leave to propagate *Truth*. Thus the Church has lost *all* power, that is, has lost *her self*, being able neither to *lead* nor *drive* her equally-gifted Subjects: so that her exercising Jurisdiction over them would by this wicked Doctrine be a most Tyrannical persecution, and every such private man's refractory Disobedience (see the

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wonderful gifts of the *private Spirit*!) would become a most Glorious Confession of Christian Faith; and every Rebell acting against the Church, (so he be but so self-conceited as to judge he knows more of God's mind in the Scripture then all the Church besides) would by this Doctrine (in case the Secular power should think fit to curb his Insolence) be a *most blessed Martyr*, such, no doubt, as *John Fox'es* were.

The Fifth Examen.

Sifting the Eleven remaining Principles, which seem Chiefly to concern the nature of Faith.

WHoever hath perus'd the foregoing Examin, and reflected well upon what a sandy Foundation Dr. *St.* has built his Faith, will doubtless expect that he will assigne it such a nature as is of no exceeding great strength; for fear lest his *weak Grounds* should not support his *Superstructures* nor his *Proofs* carry home to his Conclusions.

Now the Conceit which the Generality of Christians have of Faith, importing it's *true* Nature, is that 'tis such an Assent as is *impossible to be an Errour* or *False*; Whence fol-

follows, that its Grounds are likewise *such*: And indeed, since all hold, That Faith is an Immoveable and Unalterable Assent which is to bide by us and we by it all our whole lives till we arrive at our future state, the Region of Light, where we shall see *facie ad faciem*, who sees not that it must *be held*; and so (since there can be no Necessity to *hold* a thing to *be* what *'tis not*) must *be* Impossible to be false? for, otherwise were we to *hold* it, that is, were it self *possible to be False*, it ought to be held *Alterable*, when ever more *Light* should appear discovering it to be an Errour. To evince this Truth I have produc't multitudes of Arguments in *Faith vindicated*, none of which has been thought fit to be reply'd to, though mine and Faith's opposers still craftily persist to insinuate the contrary Errour; But I will at present make use only of one, which will, I conceive, best conclude the Point between us. For, Dr. *St.* makes Scripture *the Rule of Faith*, and so speaks of Faith as standing under what he conceives the *firmest* and *clearest* Ground, and which was left by God for *Mankind* to embrace Faith. I do the *same* when I assert the Churches Testimony or *Tradition* to be the *Rule*. So that neither of us speak of the *particular* odd ways by which *some* persons casually come to have Faith, nor of Faith as had by *such* means, but of the

common

common road-way left by God for Mankind to attain to Faith, and of Faith as ſtanding under *ſuch* a Means or Rule. Upon this Agreement if we joyn iſſue, and proceed, it ſeems that nothing but evident Obſtinacy againſt manifeſt Truth can hinder us from agreeing in our Concluſion. For ſince, if we may be *deceiv'd* in *beleeving* even while we follow the direction of that *Rule* which God himſelf has appointed to light us to Faith, it would follow that there is no means imaginable likely to do that effect, as alſo that God himſelf had deceived us, which is both Blaſphemous and Impoſſible, it muſt follow, That Faith built upon the *Rule* left by *God* (whether *Scripture* or *Tradition*) muſt be Impoſſible to be an Errour, and conſequently its Ground or Rule muſt be Impoſſible to be Falſe or Erroneous. Wherefore Dr. *St.* is oblig'd as well as I am to hold heartily this double Concluſion, and, if he attempts to diſcourſe of that point, to make it out, that the Rule he aſſignes is ſuch as cannot leave us in Errour and our Infinitely-perfect God in the blame. How far ſhort he hath fallen hitherto of making out his pretended Rule of Faith (*viz.* Scripture as ſtanding under the Judgement of every private perſon) to be Impoſſible to ſuffer men to err while adhering to that way, is already ſhown; How heartily now he aſſerts Faith

it self, built on the Means or Rule left by God, to be Impossible to be Erroneous or False, comes next to be examined.

20. *No mans Faith can therefore be Infallible meerly because the Proponent is said to be Infallible: because the nature of Assent doth not depend upon the objective Infallibility of any thing without us; but is agreeable to the Evidence we have of it in our mindes; for Assent is not built on the nature of things, but their Evidence to us.*

This Principle begins with a Fallacy of *non causa pro causa*. For what man in his Witts ever said or held, that Faith must therefore *be* Infallible, meerly because the Proponent *is said* to be Infallible; must a *meer saying*, that is, a saying neither self-evident nor prov'd, be held a competent Ground to build the *Existence* of any thing upon? But let us suppose that Dr. *St.* by the words [*is said to be*] meant [*is*] or [*prov'd to be*] as is indeed our true Tenet, let's see how he confutes us.

Our Tenet is, that in case the Proposer of Faith be Infallible, all that rely on It for that particular are *by so doing* Infallible likewise. He argues against us from the nature of *Assent* which he sayes *depends not on the Objective Infallibility of any thing without us, but is agreeable*

agreeable to the evidence we have of it in our minds. If he means by the words [*depends not*] such a dependence as is *Immediate*, I grant it; For our Assent being an effect wrought *in* our Soul, and a Result of some foregoing knowledges, notions or natures of things *within us*, which *produce* that Assent if it be a Conclusion; or compound it if a *First Principle*; 'tis impossible any thing *without us*, and staying there, without *evidencing it self to our minds*, or breeding some Interiour discovery of it self there, should beget any Assent at all concerning it. But, if he means by those words that our Assent depends not *mediately*, or depends not *at all* on the Object without us, as his large Expression seems to signify, then 'tis absolutely deny'd; For the Evidence of the *Thing in us*, is an Effect of the *nature* of the Thing *without us*; nor could evidence of the Thing *in us* cause Assent without such dependence on the Object or Thing *without us*, for, unless by means of the *Object* and *dependence* on it, this *Evidence* it self could not be. The last words, [*For Assent is not built on the nature of things but their evidence to us*] is but a Tautology or short rehearsal of the reason lately given, and so needs no new Answer.

Yet, however D. *St.* for want of Logick expresses himself ill & confusedly, there is notwithstanding a kind of knot in in his dis-

and I ſhall lend my beſt Aſſiſtance to looſe it; but, firſt it will be neceſſary to put down his three next Principles, ſince they all ſeem to club into one Dilemma againſt Infallibility in any Proponent.

21. *It is therefore neceſſary in order to an Infallible Aſſent, that every particular perſon be Infallibly aſſiſted in judging of the matters propoſed to him to be beleeved; ſo that the Ground on which a neceſſity of ſome Externall Infallible Proponent is aſſerted, muſt rather make every particular perſon Infallible, if no Divin Faith can be without an Infallible Aſſent; and ſo renders any other Infallibility uſeleſs.*

22. *If no particular perſon be Infallible in the Aſſent he gives to matters propoſed by others to him, then no man can be Infallibly ſure that the Church is Infallible: and ſo the Churches Infallibility can ſignify nothing to our Infallible Aſſurance without an equal Infallibility in our ſelves in the belief of it.*

23. *The Infallibility of every particular perſon being not aſſerted by thoſe who plead for the Infallibility of a Church, and the one rendring the other uſeleſs (for, if every perſon be Infallible, what need any repreſentative Church to be ſo!) and the Infallibility of a Church being of no effect if every perſon be not Infallible in the belief of it, we are farther to inquire*

what

what certainty men may have in matters of Faith, supposing no externall Proponent to be Infallible.

Ere I begin my Discourse I am to note Dr. *St's.* shuffling way of contriving his Sentences here, or of penning his *Principles* as he call's them. His 21*st* contends 'tis necessary to Infallible Assent, that every particular person be infallibly assisted in judging of *the mattens proposed to him to be beleev'd.* And the 22d in consonancy to it, mentions the Infallibility of particular persons in the Assent they give *to matters proposed by others to them*, which clearly signify that Faith cannot be Infallible unless we have Infallibility or Infallible Knowledge of *the Points of Faith*, (for what can [*matters propos'd to us to be believ'd*] signify else?) On the other side in the 21*st* Princ. he seems only to aim at proving, there must be Infallibility in us that the Proponent is Infallible. Also *Princ.* 22. he concludes, that to our Infallible Assurance there is required equal Infallibility in our selves in the belief of the Churches Infallibility. And lastly, *Princ.* 23. he concludes, the *Infallibility of the Church of no effect if every person be not Infallible in the beleef of it.* Which expressions are of quite different sense from the former, and require not Infallibility in the *in the matters propos'd to be*

leeved, as did the other, but only in knowing the *Proponent* to be Infallible. Now, because I have no mind to cavill but am heartily glad when he gives me occasion to handle any good point, I will not take him as his former words sounded, it being perfect Nonsense to require evidence of the Points Propos'd ere we can be certain of the Authority that Proposes them (for what need can there be either of any Proposer, or of knowing him Infallible, if we be Infallible certain antecedently of the Points themselves,) but I shall willingly pass by those expressions as effects either of a strange Unwariness, or of a crafty Preparing for future Evasion, and discourse of the Later *Thesis*; For in truth it hints at a very excellent difficulty, though he proposes it but ill and pursues it worse.

I will therefore clear his discourse from his contradictory expressions, and put it home and close as well as I can, and so as I hope himself will not say I at all wrong it. He seems them to argue thus. *Objective Infallibility in another* (viz. *the Proponent*) *avails nothing to make my Faith or Assent Infallible, unless I be also Infallibly certain that the Proponent is Infallible, wherefore* (in case Infallibility be requisit to Faith) *every one of the Faithfull must be also Infallible.* But *this renders both these Infallibilities useles and Insignificant; for the Infallibility of the Church is*

of

of no effect, if every person be not Infallible, and if every person be Infallible what need any Church Representative or Councill be so: Therefore, this Doctrine of an Infallible Proponent is frivolous and Inconsistent.

To make way towards the clearing this considerable difficulty, I premise these few Notes.

1. That a man may be *Infallible*, or out of the power of being deceiv'd in some particular thing two manner of wayes: Either, from his penetrating the reasons which conclude the thing to be as he judges, that is, from his *knowledge* that the Thing is so, which we may fitly term *Formally Infallible*. Or else by adhering, not through Knowledge, but accidentally as it were, to some thing which is a reall Truth, though he penetrate not the Grounds *why* it is True; or by adhering to the Judgment of another person in some thing or Tenet whose Judgment is indeed well grounded and *Certain* as to that *Thing*, though he see not 'tis so. And such a man may fitly be said to be *materially* Infallible. Both of them are absolutely secur'd from Errour or Infallible *Fundamentally* by the Thing's being such as they judge it to be, that is, (in our case) by relying on a Proponent which is Infallible; and they differ only in the wayes by which they come to rely upon that Proponent; the one being led to it by

by *perfect Sight* that the thing *muſt* be ſo, or that the Proponent *muſt* be Infallible; the other perhaps *blindly*, at beſt not out of clear diſcernment embracing that Judgment, yet, as long as he adheres to the Judgment of another man who cannot be deceiv'd or in an Errour as to that thing, himſelf is actually ſecur'd from poſſibility of erring; and ſo, Infallible or Incapable to be in an Errour likewiſe. To this difficulty I had regard in my *Faith vindicated* when I diſtinguiſh't between Faith's being *True in us*, and *True to us*: For the blindeſt Aſſenter that is, though he *ſtumble* upon a Truth, yet if he *really hold* it, his Judgment is truly and really *conformable to the Thing* or Object, and conſequently *True* or impoſſible to Falſe, and ſo himſelf undeceivable or uncapable to be in an Errour in holding thus: yet, if we go about to relate that *Truth* which is *in* him, to evident reaſons or *Grounds* in his mind; connaturally breeding that *Conformity* of his Judgment to the Thing, there is no ſuch thing perhaps to be found; whence, 'tis not *True to him*, or *evident to him 'tis True*, ſince he ſees not or knows not that 'tis True; yet ſtill, as I ſaid before, he is Infallible or Impoſſible to be in an Errour while he adheres to it as *True*, becauſe that Judgment of his is *in reality* conformable to the thing.

2. 'Tis requiſit and neceſſary that the

Aſſent

Assent of *Faith* in *every* particular Beleever be at least *materially Infallible*, provided it be built (as it ought) upon the means laid by God for Mankind to embrace Faith, that is, upon the *Right Rule of Faith*. For (omitting many other mischiefs and Inonveniencies) otherwise, as was lately prov'd, it would follow that God, who is *essential Truth*, did lead Mankind into *Errour*, in case relying sincerely on what God order'd them to rely on, their Judgment, *by so doing*, did become Erroneous.

3. 'Tis requisit and necessary that the Assent of Faith in diverse particular Beleevers be *formally Infallible*, or that those persons be Infallibly certain by Evident Reason, that the Authority or Rule of Faith they rely on cannot *herein* deceive them. Else Great Witts and acute Reflecters whose piercing understandings require Convictive Grounds for their Faith, would remain for ever unsatisfy'd; nor could the wisest Christians sincerely and heartily *Assent* to, nor with Honesty *profess* the *truth* of their Faith, nor could any *prove* it *True* to establish Rational doubters *in it*, or convert men of exact knowledge *to it*, or convince Hereticks calling the *Truth* of it in question. Nor could Governours and Leading Persons with any Conscience or Credit propose and Preach the *Truth* of Faith to the Generality: Also it's

Truth

Truth being otherwise unmaintainable, the best vigour of Faith and it's efficacy to *work through Charity*, must needs be exceedingly enfeebled & deaded. Tis necessary then that the Grounds of Faith be both *Conclusive* of it's *Truth*, and also *penetrable* by those whose Proper work it is to make deep Inspection into them; whence they will become *formally* or *knowingly*-Infallible that the Authority they rely on for Faith's Conveyance *cannot possibly deceive them.*

4. Besides these men who are to be *Formally* Infallible in the *Grounds* of Faith, and so able to *discourse* of those *Grounds*, and make out their *Absolute Certainty* by way of *Skill* or *Art*, there ought to be moreover *another* sort of men in the Church *Formally*-Infallible in discerning the *True* and *distinct* notion of each *Point* of Faith and this is the proper work of the *Governours* of the Church. For *these*, by reason of their *State* of Life, which is to *meditate* on God's Law day and night, their perpetual *Converse* with the Affair of Faith, by Preaching, Teaching, Catechizing, Exhorting; their Concern to overlook their Flock lest any Innovatour should infect them with *Novelties*; their Constant Addiction to observe exactly their Rule, *Tradition*, the Standard by which they govern themselves in distinguishing the true *Faithfull* from revolting *Apostats*

of *Hereticks*; their Duty to be well vers't in the Doctrine of *Fathers*, and Acts of former *Councils*, and according to these *soberly* and *gravely* (not *quirkingly* and with witty tricks) to understand and *interpret* Holy Scripture: These Eminent Personages, and Chief *Magistrates* and *Masters* of the Faithfull being thus furnisht with all requisite endowments to give them a most *distinct* and *exact* knowledge of the *doctrine* descended to them by Tradition, and of the *sense* of the Church, in case any Heretick revolts openly from the formerly deliver'd Faith, these Men, I say, are by the *Majesty* and sway of their most venerable and most ample *Authority* to quash and subdue his *petty* party newly sprung up; and either *reduce* him to his duty by wholsome advice and *discipline*, or, if he persists in his *Obstinacy* to cut him off solemnly from the Church by Excommunication, that so the sounder Faithfull may look upon him (according to our Saviours command) as on a *Heathen or a Publican*; it being thus made evident, that he stands against all his *Superiours*, and rebels against the *most sacred* Authority upon Earth. Or, in case that Heretick cloak his poisonous doctrine in *ambiguous* expressions, or goes about to pervert the *words* used formerly by the Church, by drawing them to a *sinister sense* never intended by Her; *They*, being

perfectly acquainted with the language and *ſenſe* of the Church, are to invent and aſſign *proper* words to expreſs the Churches ſence, and ſuch as are *pertinent* and *effectual* for the preſent juncture and exigency to defeat the crafty Attempts of thoſe quibbling Underminers of Faith: or elſe, they are to *clear* the true ſence of the *former* words us'd by the Church by *declaring* in what meaning the Church takes and ever took them; And ſometimes too, beating the Heretick at his own weapon, Scripture's Letter, by avowing *this* to be the ſence in which the Church *ever* took ſuch and ſuch places. Hence, they are ſaid to *define* Faith, that is, to *expreſſe* in *diſtinct* words it's preciſe *Limits* and bounds, that ſo no leaven of Errour may poſſibly intermingle it ſelf; and, to *ſeal* and recommend their *Acts* by ſtamping on them the moſt Grave, moſt Venerable, and moſt Sacred Authority in the whole Chriſtian world. Now, that this Authority of the Church Repreſentative is Infallible in knowing the Points of Faith, and that on the beſt manner is prov'd hence, becauſe, if ſuch a Learned Body, conſiſting of the moſt Eminent and Knowing Perſonages in the world, can be deceiv'd while they rely on the Means left by God to preſerve mankinde from errour in underſtanding the Points of Faith, 'tis evident *no man* in the world can be ſecur'd

thereby

thereby from Errour, and ſo the *Means* would be *no Means* to arrive at *Truth*, but rather a Means to leade men into *Errour*, ſince they *err*'d relying *ſolely* on *that*, which, it being ſuppoſed to have been intended by God for a *Contrary* end, is abſolutely Impoſſible.

5. Though the *Subſtance* or *Eſſence* of Faith conſiſts in believing what is True upon the Divine Authority certainly engag'd for thoſe Truths, which is the Formal Motive of Believing, and therefore 'tis *enough* for trne Faith that the Generality of the Church or the Vulgar be *materially Infallible* in their Faith; yet it addes evidently a great *perfection* to Faith that they be Formally Infallible, and that the Faithfull *ſee* with Infallible Certainty that the Divine Authority *is* actually engag'd when they believe. Firſt, becauſe Faith is an Intellectual Virtue, and ſo to proceed *knowingly* upon it's Grounds, makes it more Agreeable to the Underſtanding and Perfective of it. 2. Becauſe the *more evident* 'tis, that the Divine Authority is engag'd, the *more heartily* thoſe who reverence it, are diſpos'd to *ſubmit their Judgments* by believing: whence Faith in *ſuch* Perſons is more lively, firm and Immoveable, alſo more Efficacious and (if other Conſiderations be equal) more apt to *work through Charity*, than it is in others. More-

over, such Faithful are incomparably more able to *satisfy* and *convert* others; being able (as is supposed) to *make out* evidently the Grounds of their Faith; Wherefore, every thing being then in it's *perfectest* state when 'tis able to produce it's like, or another of it's own kinde, 'tis a signe that Faith in such men is Ripe, Manly, and Perfect; since 'tis able to propagate it self to others, or (as S. *Paul* phrases it) *gignere in Evangelio*. Whence, those who are to *convert* souls and *propagate* Faith, are oblig'd to labour all that may be to accomplish themselves in this particular, lest they fall short of this Perfection which seems *properly* and peculiarly *due* to their state. For 'tis not so opprobrious to the *Layity* to be unable to perform this, but 'tis highly so to *them*, because they are *lame* without it.

6. Notwithstanding this, 'tis God's Will that *all* the Faithfull should be *formally* Infallible in their Faith, or *know Infallibly* the Grounds of Faith *cannot be False*, as far as they are capable. For, this being (as was lately shown) a *Perfection* in Faith, and God, who is Essential Goodness, not being *Envious*, but desirous his Creatures should have *all* the Good they are *capable* to receive, especially such goods as tend to the *bettering* their *souls* and promoting them towards *Heaven*, it follows that he wills them

this

this Perfection in Faith, as far as it can ſtand with the Univerſal Order of the World, or the particular natures of Things, that is, as far as they are capable to receive it.

7. He hath therefore ordain'd *ſuch* a Means by which to know his Will as far as concerns our Belief, or what he would have us believe, that is, he has conſtituted *ſuch* a Rule of Faith, that it's Certainty may be *moſt eaſily* penetrable by *all* degrees and ſorts of the Faithfull. Whence follows moſt evidently that *Tradition* and not *Scripture* is *that Rule*. For, of *all* ways of Knowing and Aſcertaining imaginable, nothing is *more eaſie* to be comprehended or to ſatisfy people of *all* ſorts then is that of *Witneſſing Authority*; as we experience in their perfect belief of K. *James* or K. *H.8ths* exiſtence, and ſuch like. The Grounds of which Truths, not needing to be *learnt* at School, but being either *inbred* or by an ordinary converſe with the world *inſtil'd* into them, nothing is eaſier then for the *wiſer* ſort of them to fall into the account of it *of themſelves*, occaſion being given; as alſo to *awaken*, as it were, thoſe dormant Knowledges in the *Vulgar*, and make them reflect and ſee (not with a *clear* and *diſtinct* ſight as do the wiſer portion of the Church, but) with a *groſſe* and *confuſed*, yet *ſolid* Knowledge, and ſuitable to

their

their pitch, that a Rule of *ſuch* a nature is *Certain*; and ſo, thoſe who profeſſedly *own* and *proceed* upon it are *in the truth*; they who *reject* it, in an *Errour*; Whereas yet they are utterly Incapable by any Maxims in their rude Underſtandings either to know that the Letter of the Scripture, on the rightneſs of which all depends was preſerv'd from Errour, among ſo many Tranſlatious and Tranſcriptions; or that the Senſe is neceſſarily *ſuch* as they conceive it to be, amidſt ſuch multitudes of Commentators and Sects wrangling about the *meaning* of that Letter; nor yet are they *competent* Judges of the *skill* of all thoſe ſeveral Sects and ſorts of men whom they ſee and hear differ about the ſenſe of it. *Tradition* then of the Church being thus prov'd *the Rule of Faith*, 'tis both farther ſhown how Unreaſonable, Unnatural and Unſafe Dr. *St's private-ſpirited* Rule of Faith is, and alſo (even hence) demonſtrated againſt him here that Tradition of the Church is Infallible; ſince being by this means prov'd to be the Rule appointed by God to light Mankinde to their Faith, 'tis impoſſible that thoſe who rely and proceed upon it, ſhould be led into Errour, and alſo Impoſſible that Faith it ſelf thus grounded ſhould be Falſe.

But I needed not have gone thus far to confute D. *St's* four Principles now under hand.

hand. The four firſt Notes had abundantly given them their Anſwer; and 'tis time we now begin to apply them to that purpoſe.

Whereas then he grounds them all on our Tenet, That *No Divine Faith can be without an Infallible Aſſent*, he may pleaſe to know that we only mean by thoſe words there *materially Infallible*, or ſo as *cannot poſſibly be an Errour*: and in this ſenſe we own the Poſition, and ſo muſt he too unleſſe he will ſpeak open blaſphemy; For, Divine Faith being a believing upon the Divine Authority, and (as we both ſuppoſe) upon ſome Means laid by God himſelf by which he propoſes to us *what* we are to beleeve, by telling us he *has ſaid* it, in caſe an Aſſent *thus* Grounded could poſſibly be an Errour, it would follow neceſſarily that God himſelf would be the Cauſe of that Errour. The *Subſtance* then of Faith could be preſerved, and the *Chief End* of Faith (our Salvation) *on ſome faſhion* attained, were there no more than this, that is, though never a man in the whole world *did* know or *could* come to know that the Rule of Faith were Infallible; provided *none* in the Church did *ſpeculate*, and ſo, looking into the Grounds of his Faith, and finding them (as far as he could ſee) *Inconcluſive*, did begin to ſuſpect the *Truth* of it; nor any *out of* the Church did *oppoſe* Faith; For the Faithfull would

would in that case be in *actual possession* of those Excellent Truths call'd *Points of Faith*, firmly assented to by their Understandings, which were apt to produce those Good Dispositions of their Wills, call'd *Virtues*; in the same sort (though not in the same degree) as they do now; and, by means of *them*, they might arrive at Heaven. Thus the Dr. may see that all he builds on is a pure mistake; and that all the Faithfull may be *thus* Infallible in their Assent, and *thus* Infallible in judging the Proposer *does not*, nay *cannot* deceive us; nay Infallible *in judging thus of the matters propos'd to us to beleeve*, and yet *not one* man be *Infallibly* sure by way of *Evident Knowledge* that the Church is Infallible; because all this proceeds not in the least (in this supposition) from the reach of any man's Intellective *Faculty*, but purely from the Goodness and Conclusiveness of the *Grounds* laid by God, and his good Providence which led those men to embrace them, though they neither *penetrate* nor went about to *discourse* them, but simply to *believe* them; on the same manner as our ruder unreflecting vulgar are led now. But, in this case, were all the World no wiser, the wisest in the Church would be no wiser then the weakest and rudest vulgar now mention'd; wherefore, both for that reason, and many others assign'd in my 3d

and

and 4th Note, it was *absolutely requisite* to the Church, and so becoming God's Providence to order that it should be *otherwise*; and that the *Conclusiveness* of those Infallible Grounds on which God has founded our Faith should be penetrable by those who set themselves to such *speculations*, or fall into doubts concerning them, according as the exigencies of the Church shall be found to need such helps.

If this will not serve Dr. *Sr.* (I am sure it will serve to defeat all his Arguments) I shall farther tell him that the Generality or main Body in the Church is *formally Infallible* in judging the Church to be *such* in delivering down the First-taught Faith, as I have prov'd in my 6th and 7th note and elsewhere. Besides my reasons given there and in other places, I must desire him and the rest of my Readers that in conceiving how this may be, they would take their measures from the *Absolute Certainty* such people are capable of in *Parallell* matters, and not from their *Ability* to *explain* or *defend* this absolute Certainty, or their *Constancy* in *adhering* to it if combated by plausible reasons; for he is a very mean Reflecter upon Nature, who observes not that the Vulgar have Absolute Natural evidence of *many* Truths, which yet they can neither give reason for, declare, defend, nor, perhaps (through levity in-

would in that caſe be in *actual poſſeſſion* of thoſe Excellent Truths call'd *Points of Faith*, firmly aſſented to by their Underſtandings, which were apt to produce thoſe Good Diſpoſitions of their Wills, call'd *Virtues*; in the ſame ſort (though not in the ſame degree) as they do now; and, by means of *them*, they might arrive at Heaven. Thus the Dr. may ſee that all he builds on is a pure miſtake; and that all the Faithfull may be *thus* Infallible in their Aſſent, and *thus* Infallible in judging the Propoſer *does not*, nay *cannot* deceive us; nay Infallible *in judging thus of the matters propos'd to us to beleeve*, and yet *not one* man be *Infallibly* ſure by way of *Evident Knowledge* that the Church is Infallible; becauſe all this proceeds not in the leaſt (in this ſuppoſition) from the reach of any man's Intellective *Faculty*, but purely from the Goodneſſe and Concluſiveneſſe of the *Grounds* laid by God, and his good Providence which led thoſe men to embrace them, though they neither *penetrate* nor went about to *diſcourſe* them, but ſimply to *believe* them; on the ſame manner as our ruder unreflecting vulgar are led now. But, in this caſe, were all the World no wiſer, the wiſeſt in the Church would be no wiſer then the weakeſt and rudeſt vulgar now mention'd; wherefore, both for that reaſon, and many others aſſign'd in my 3*d*

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and 4th Note, it was *abſolutely requiſite* to the Church, and ſo becoming God's Providence to order that it ſhould be *otherwiſe*; and that the *Conclusiveneſs* of thoſe Infallible Grounds on which God has founded our Faith ſhould be penetrable by thoſe who ſet themſelves to ſuch *ſpeculations*, or fall into doubts concerning them, according as the exigencies of the Church ſhall be found to need ſuch helps.

If this will not ſerve Dr. *S*. (I am ſure it will ſerve to defeat all his Arguments) I ſhall farther tell him that the Generality or main Body in the Church is *formally Infallible* in judging the Church to be *ſuch* in delivering down the Firſt-taught Faith, as I have prov'd in my 6th and 7th note and elſewhere. Beſides my reaſons given there and in other places, I muſt deſire him and the reſt of my Readers that in conceiving how this may be, they would take their meaſures from the *Abſolute Certainty* ſuch people are capable of in *Parallell* matters, and not from their *Ability* to *explain* or *defend* this abſolute Certainty, or their *Conſtancy* in *adhering* to it if combated by plauſible reaſons; for he is a very mean Reflecter upon Nature, who obſerves not that the Vulgar have Abſolute Natural evidence of *many* Truths, which yet they can neither give reaſon for, declare, defend, nor, perhaps (through levity in-

cident to ſuch weak ſouls) do very firmly adhere to; and no wonder, ſince ſo great a man as *Sextus Empiricus* ſpeculated himſelf out of the Conceit of the Certainty of his *Senſes*; of which yet none doubts but Nature, till he began to *pervert* it by *wrong ſpeculations*, had given *him* as *Infallible Certainty* as to any *other*. Alſo, they are to reflect how Infallibility) or, which is all one, *Certainty*) may be in a thouſand different degrees according to the greater or leſſer Capacity of the ſubject; which they will beſt comprehend by reflecting with how different a Clearneſs many things appear to us now we are at Age, and how dimly when we were young, which yet we were abſolutely Certain of at that time. Nor yet does one of thoſe Infallibilities ſpoken of render the other *Uſeleſs*; for they may either be about different Objects, as if the *Church Officers* were formally Infallible in knowing what particular Points came down from Chriſt's time, and penetrating the diſtinct Limits of each point; and thoſe other *Particular* perſons be only Infallible in judging the Church to *be ſo*; as it happens in many Controvertiſts, who are well inſtructed in the Grounds of their Faith, yet not ſo well verſt in the nature of particular points, but believe them only by Implicit Faith; or elſe one of their knowledges may be *more Clear*

and

and *distinct* than the others, and so serve to *perfect* and *advance* it, in the same manner as *Art* does *Nature*. Least of all can it follow that the Infallibility of the *Church Representative* is needless; for This is not intended to teach the Faithfull their Faith at first, nor do I remember ever to have seen a Generall Council cited in a Catechism; but this is performed by the Church *Diffusive* by her *Practise* and *Language*, and by her *Pastors* in their *Catechisms*, and *Instructions*; But it's use is to *secure* and *preserve* Faith *already taught* and known, from receiving any *taint* by the Equivocating Heretick, and to recommend it more Authoritatively to the Faithfull, when *clear'd*. And, whoever reads my 4th Note will see so many particularities in the Members which compound a Representative Church above others who are purely Parts of *Ecclesia Credens*, that he cannot in any Reason judge them *Useless*, though those *others* be in an *Inferiour* degree Certain of their Faith too. For all this while the word [*Infallible*] which seems to have so loud a sound, and is made such a monstrous peece of business by the Deniers of it, is in plain Terms no more but just barely *Certain*, as I have prov'd *Faith Vind.* p. 37. 38. and *Reason against Rail.* p. 113.

To come closer up then to my Adversary; His 20th Principle which speaks of *Assent*

in common is wholly built upon a False supposition, that it can only be Grounded upon *Evidence*; For however indeed in *perfect Reflecters* that are unbyast, *Evidence* of the Object or of the Credibleness of the Authority, is alwayes requisit to breed *Assent*, yet Experience teaches us that Assent, in *weak* and *unreflecting* persons, is frequently built on a great *Probability*, sometimes a *very little* one, and sometimes men Assent upon little or no reason at all, their Passion or Interest byassing their wills, and by it their Understandings, and this many times even *against* such reason as would be Evident to *another*. Again, *matteriall Infallibility*, which is enough to that Assent we speak of, precisely and solely consider'd, depends *solely*, at least *Principally*, on the *Object*, contrary to what is there asserted. And, whereas he says Princ. 29. that the *Infallibility of every Particular person is not asserted by those who plead for the Infallibility of a Church*, he sees by this discourse it both *is* and *must be* Asserted, and that we maintain that every particular person must be *materially Infallible* or incapable of erring while he relies on the Grounds laid and recommended by God; that is, while he believes the *Church*, which yet is far from rendring the *Formal* Infallibility of the Church *useless*, unless he will say, that because it suffices for the pitch of *weak* peo-

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ple, (whose duty *'tis not* to *maintain* and *make out* the *Truth* of their Faith) that they be simply *in the right*, or *void of Error*, and that they see after a *gross* manner that the thing *is so*, though they cannot *defend* it; therefore there is no need that those whose duty 'tis to *do so*, should be able to *penetrate* the Grounds of Faith, and, so, explicate, prove and maintain it to be *True*. Nor will it follow, that though the Generality were after a *rude* and *gross* manner *formally* Infallible in their belief that the Church is Infallible, and therefore that the Points she proposes are all likewise *Infallibly-true*, it will not follow, I say hence, that a *greater* and *clearer* and more *penetrative* degree of Formal Infallibility is *useless* in Church-Governours; for, as appears by my *4th* Note, there are many other things to be done by them of absolute necessity for the Church, which far exceed the pitch and posture of those dull Knowers of the lowest Clafs, (which is the next degree above Ignorance) and are unauthoriz'd to meddle in such affairs. Unless he will say, that *Art* is needless, because there is *Nature*, or that there needs no *Judges* to decide such Cases in which the Law seems *plain*. And thus much for the clearing this concerning Point. In the rest of his Principles I shall be briefer.

But I must not pass over his Transition to them,

them, which is this [*We are further to enquire what Certainty men may have in matters of Faith, ſuppoſing no External Proponent to be Infallible.*] And he need not go far to ſatisfie his Enquiry: For, it being moſt evident by the Diſputes between the *Proteſtants* and *Socinians* that Scripture needs *ſome* External Propoſer of it's *true meaning* in ſuch kinde of Points, as alſo ſome External Propoſer or Atteſter that this is the true Text of it (on which all is built.) Alſo it being evident that Dr. *St.* (Princ. 15.) denies any *Infallible* Propoſers of either of theſe, and that here again he purſues cloſe the ſame doctrin; Laſtly, this Propoſer being *ſuch*, that, however we can have Certainty *without It* that the Divine Authority *is to be believed*, yet we muſt *depend on It* for the Knowledge *when* and *where* 'tis engag'd, that is, we muſt depend on *It* for the Certainty of our Faith; It follows, that in caſe this Proponent be *not* Infallible, it can never be made out with Infallible Certainty that the Divine Authority ſtands engag'd for the Truth of any one Point of Faith, and conſequently that *the Certainty men have in matters of Faith* is *not* an *Infallible* one. And if it be *not* an *Infallible Certainty* which Faith has (as he no where challenges, but very laboriouſly diſproves it) he need not go far to enquire or learn *what* Certainty it muſt have; for Common Senſe

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tels him and every man who has the leaſt ſpark of Natural Logick, that, if Faith muſt have *Certainty* (as he grants) and have not *Infallible Certainty*, it muſt either have *Fallible Certainty* or none at all; there being no Middle between them; and ſo, we muſt make account, that becauſe it overſtrains D. *St's weak Grounds* to aſſert Faith to be *Infallibly Certain*, therefore his next Attempt muſt be to overſtrain *Common Senſe*, and to the ineſtimable Honour of Chriſtian Religion, maintain that all Chriſtian Faith is *Fallibly-Certain*. But he muſt do it *ſmoothly* and *warily*; and, however he nam'd the word [*Infallible*] *loud* enough and *oft* enough when he was confuting *it*, yet he muſt take heed how he names the word [*Fallible*] *Certainty* when he is aſſerting *it*, leſt it breed *laughter* or *diſlike*; though it be evident out of the very Terms that he who confutes *Infallible Certainty* muſt maintain *Fallible Certainty*, if he maintains any. But now he begins his defence of Faiths Fallible Certainty, and 'tis fit we ſhould liſten: *Monſtrous* things uſe to *challenge* and even *force* Attention from the moſt unconcern'd.

24. *There are different degrees of Certainty to be attained according to the different degrees of Evidence, and meaſure of Divine Aſſiſtance; but every Chriſtian by the uſe of his reaſon and*

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Common Helps of Grace may attain to so great a degree of Certainty from the Convincing Arguments of the Christian Religion and Authority of the Scriptures; that, on the same Ground on which men doubt of the Truth of them, they may as well doubt of the Truth of those things which they judge to be most Evident to Sence & Reason.

I wish D.S. had explain'd himself here what he means by [*different degrees of Evidence*] whether some Glances or *likely* Appearances of Truth call'd *greater* or *lesser Probabilities*; or such Intellectual *Sights* at the least of them discovers the thing, *that evidenc't*, to be *be* indeed *so*, or *True*. I suspect much he means the *former*, because *these* are the most proper Grounds for *Fallible Certainty* which he is now going to establish; whereas the *Latter* sort of *Evidences* would hazard to carry too far and to beget *Infallible Certainty*, which would quite spoil his most excellent design of setling the *Fallible Certainty* of Faith; for those Evidences which show the thing to be *True*, show it at the same time to be *Impossible to be False*; whence 'tis a thousand to one that such Evidences as these would utterly destroy his beloved *Fallible Certainty*, and endanger to introduce again by necessary and enforcing consequence that Popish Doctrine of *Infallibility* which he had newly discarded

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When he adds that every Christian *may* by the means here assigned *attain to so great a degree of Certainty* &c. I had thought he had meant *Certainty of the Points of his Faith*; but my hopes were much defeated, when, coming to the Point, he flyes off to his Christians *not doubting* the *Truth* of the *convincing Arguments of Christian Religion and of the Authority of the Scriptures*; For this is far wide of our purpose and his Promise, which was to *reduce the Faith of Protestants to Principles*; whereas these words signify no more but not to doubt of *Christianity* being the *True* Religion; or Scriptures being God's word; but reaches not to *what are* those points of Christianity or *determinate* sense of Scripture in particular, which constitutes *Protestantism*, and only concerns our debate. Now 'tis evident that the Roman-Catholicks profess *not to doubt* of the convincing Grounds of Christianity, nor yet of Scripture, but to hold that Christianity is the only True Religion, and that the Scriptures are *Holy* and *God's word*: and yet we differ so much from Protestants that he thinks us Idolaters. What we are then in reason to expect from Dr. *Sr.* is, that he would bring us Grounds for the Certainty of his Faith as to *determinate* Points; viz. *Christ's God-head, a Trinity, Reality* or *not-Reality* of Christ's Body in the Eucharist and such like; and

those so certain as *that we may as well doubt of what we judge to be most evident to Sense and Reason*, as doubt of them, as he here pretends; and not put us off with Common words in stead of particular Satisfaction concerning his Faith and the Certainty thereof.

I would ask him then how it comes to pass that the *Socinian* whom he will not deny to have both *use of his reason* and *common helps of Grace*, and both *the convincing Arguments of the Christian Religion* and *Authority of Scriptures* to make use of, how, I say, he comes so to fall short of *Evidence* and consequently *Certainty* springing from that evidence concerning *Christ's God-Head* (which is a Fundamental Point of Christian Faith,) that he *doubts* it, nay utterly *denies* it, whereas yet the Protestant having the *same* means to work with, judges he has *evidence* and *Certainty* grounded on that evidence that Christ *is God*; yet all this while they dissent not at all in things *most evident to Sense or Reason*? I much fear our Drs. big words concerning his *degrees of Evidence* and the *Certainty* of his Faith built on those degrees will, when examin'd, amount to a very *obscure evidence* and a *Problematical* kind of *Assuredness*; much like those comfortable lights which both parties have when they lay even wagers at Cock-fighting & such games; giving good *hopes* to *both* sides, but good *Security* to *neither*.

neither. But, so it ought to be, if the Grounds of Faith be not *Infallibly* but only *Fallibly Certain*. which is all he is bent to prove.

25. *No man who firmly Assents to any thing as True, can at the same time entertain any suspicion of the falshood of it; for that were to make him certain and uncertain of the same thing: It is therefore absurd to say that these who are Certain of what they believe, may at the same time not know but it may be False; which is an apparent Contradiction, and overthrows any Faculty in us of judging of Truth and Falshood.*

This Principle and the next were, I conceive, intended to preserve the Dr's and his Friends Credit against the *Inference* at the end of *Faith vindicated* and diverse other Passages, shewing them either to be far from good *Christians* in *holding* that all Christian Faith may possibly be an *Errour* and Lying Imposture, or else very bad Discoursers of their own *Thoughts* whilst they *equivalently* expresst themselves in divers places to be possibly in an Errour in all they believe, nay more all Christians in the whole world to be in the same condition. This, if justified, cannot but reflect on them, being so concerning a Lapse, and I have at Dr. *St's* brisk instigation charg'd it home in *Reason against Raillery*;

lery; though I ſtill expreſs my ſelf to incline to the more Civil and more Charitable ſide; and rather lay the blame on their Underſtandings then on their Wills and Intentions. Which Book had Dr. *St.* ſeen when he writ this, he would have diſcern'd the triflingneſs of theſe weak excuſes. But let's ſee what he ſays.

His Firſt part is built on a moſt groſs and ſenſeleſs Errour, which is, that he who *firmly aſſents to a thing as True* is *Certain* of it, as appears by thoſe words, [*for this were to make him Certain and Uncertain of the ſame thing.*] I wonder exceedingly where the Dr. learn't this notion of *Certainty*? Not from *Mankinde* I am ſure, at leaſt not from thoſe who had the *uſe* of their Reaſon. For all theſe already know it to be Evident that a man may *firmly aſſent to a thing as True*, and yet that thing be *Falſe*; muſt that man therefore be *Certain* of that *Falſhood*, and that it *is*, though in reality it *be not*? We experience, that oppoſite parties firmly aſſent to *contrary* Tenets *as True*; for example, the Socinians firmly aſſent, that Chriſt *is not* God, We and the Proteſtants that Chriſt *is* God; Catholicks aſſent firmly that they *are not* Idolaters when they make uſe of Holy Images in Divine Worſhip: D. *St.* firmly aſſents they *are*; at leaſt he would perſwade his party by his Books he does ſo: Are all theſe

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opposite sides *Certain* of their several Tenets because each side *firmly assents* to them *as True*. It were an excellent world for Hereticks if this notion of Certainty would take: For these being *obstinate* in their Errours no men more *firmly assent* to Falshoods then they; and questionless the Generality of them judg'd what they held, *True* too: nay, they must *all* do so, if they once be put *firmly assenting*, as in our case; for to *assent* to a thing is to *judge* it to be indeed *True*; By which means all Hereticks in the world are *Certain* of their *Errours*; and, if they be *Certain* of them Common Sense tels them they *ought* to hold what they are Certain of. Again, slight Probabilities make many weak people *firmly assent*, so does Passion and Interest: yet they are *all* by this new doctrin *Certain* of what they hold, and so all's well. 'Tis now come to light *what kinde* of Certainty D. *St.* intended to prescribe for Faith after he had rejected *Infallibility*; namely, *such* a Certainty as one might have whether the Thing be True or no, meerly by vertue of *firmly assenting to it as True*. And in this sense I think I may say *he* is Certain of *his* Faith, and I hope he will be so civil as to requite me with maintaining that *I* am *certain* of *my* Faith too, for we both *firmly assent to them as Truths*, and so we are both very good friends, and by the same method

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so are Turks and Jews atton'd to Christians. Nothing is so proper to reconcile Contradictions, as a *Chimæra*, *viz.* a *Fallible certainty*, or *such* a certainty as is *none*: Identical Propositions are meer toys to them; or, as Dr. T. says, *good for nothing*; But Fallible certainty, or *Certainties* that are *no Certainties*, can work wonders, and even do more then miracle. Ridiculous Folly! not to see that when any one says [*I am certain of such a thing*] all mankind understands him to mean he has such *Grounds* as infer that thing *is* as he *says*, and not only that he has a *Firm Assent to it as True*, without intending that he has any Grounds to enforce the Truth of it. This is what I often reflected upon in Dr. *T.* (*Reason against Railery*,) that his discourse still aim'd to take the business of Certainty out of the hands of the *Object*, and put it constantly upon the *Subject*, and to make account he was *sure* the thing *was so*, because he verily *judg'd* it, or did *not doubt it* to be so; And Dr. *St.* is here carrying on the same wise plot to which he begun to make way in his 20*th* Princip. where he told us that *Assent is not built on the nature of things but their Evidence to us*. Indeed, if he speak of an Assent which it matters not whether it be *True* or *False*, or, rather which *is* or *may be* False 'tis meerly built on our own Fancies

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and Conceits (which I suppose he must mean there by the word *Evidence*) But if the Assent we speak of, and to which himself applies it, be that of *Faith*, which must necessarily be *True*; both It and the Evidence which immediately breeds it *must* forcibly either be built on the *nature of things*, or else on *nothing*, and so both the pretended *Evidence* is a *False Light*, and the *Assent* it self *False* and *Chimerical*. On the other side, in case if the *Evidence* and consequently the *Assent* be built on the Nature of things, which are Footsteps of Gods Infinite Wisdom in which he has imprinted all Created Truths, and establisht them under penalty of the highest Folly and Contradiction *to be inerrably what they are*; it follows, that; in case the *Evidence* had from those things be indeed a *true Evidence* or a *right Knowledge* of their natures, our understanding *Power* will be the same *within* as *they* are *without*, and so *Inerrable* in it's *Assent* and it's *Certainty* built on those natures; so that as their *Metaphysical verity* immediately depending on *God*, is fixt by that Essentially Unchangeable Being in a participated (but yet absolute) unchangeableness in *being what they are*; so *Formal Verity* or *Truth in us* being an Immediate effect of those *Natures* thus establisht, working upon our Understanding transfuses into

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It, that is, into our *Knowledge*, and consequently our *Assent* and *Certainty* such a proper effect of themselves as sutes with the Subject in which 'tis received, *viz.* an *Intellectual* Unchangeableness or an Unchangeableness built on *Knowledge* of those Natures, that is an *Infallibleness*. No wonder then both our Drs. in their weak discourses fly off so from depending for their Assents or Faith on the *Objects* or Natures of things, and recurr still to the *Subject*, for by this means *Common Sense* is driven out of the world, and *Non-sense* and *Contradiction* grow in great request. And, first, Infallibility or true Certainty is radically destroyed, which otherwise (according to the discourse now made) must forcibly be admitted: then *Fallible Certainty* comes into great Credit, or such a Certainty as is *firmly assenting to a thing as True* whether it be true or no; that is, such Certainties as are no Certainties but Wilful Adhesions; such a Faith as is *no* Faith but *Fancy*; such a *Religion* as is *no* Religion but *Folly* or Interest; and such *Truths* as are *no* Truths but *possible Falshoods*: In a word, the Object set aside and the *dependence of our Assents upon things without us*, as the Dr. would have it, the subjects are at Liberty to hold and say what best likes the spirit *within them*, or their voluntary *Fancy*; in which consists the glorious Liberty of D. *St's* Blessed Reformation.

I grant

I grant him then :hat *no man who firmly aſſents to any thing as true, can at the ſame time entertain any ſuſpicion of it's Falſhood.* But I deny that this plea will either acquit him or Dr. T. from the imputation of making Chriſtian Faith *poſſible to be Falſe* which was objected; for why may not this man who firmly aſſents to a thing as true, *now*, or *to day*, both *ſuſpect* and *ſee* it to be Falſe *to morrow*, unleſs he can ſhew that that Aſſent of his depends on the *Object* or is built on the unchangeably-fixt *natures of Things*, which Dr. *St.* denies in expreſs terms, *Princ.* 20. or what can eſtabliſh him in his *Aſſent* of *Faith*, if that do not? Is it not evident he *may* change if he may ſee *true Reaſon* may be brought *againſt* it? What would do him credit in this caſe is to offer to make it out that, (Aſſent requiring Evidence, and, ſo, *Firm* Aſſent *Clear* Evidence,) he has this *Clear Evidence* from the *Object* to ground this *Firm Aſſent*, for then we may be ſure his Aſſent will be Unalterable and *ſolidly-grounded*, or Impoſſible to be Falſe, as becomes Faith; not deſultory, Inconſtant and weakly-built, as is the nature of *Opinion*. But this my two Adverſaries muſt not do: For how can they pretend to an Unalterable Aſſent, if *Aſſent be not built on the nature of Things* only *which* are Unchangeable? or how to *Clear Evidence*, if they *may*, notwithſtanding that Evi-

dence *be* ſtill *deceiv'd*: as they muſt ſay *all* the Church *may* in the Grounds of their Faith if Infallibility be denied: Or laſtly, how will their Evidence be *Clear*, if the nature of Moral Things will not bear ſo clear an Evidence or afford us ſo much light of themſelves as by it to *conclude* abſolutely the Thing is *ſo*; as when it comes to the point I foreſee both theſe profound Admirers of *Moral* Certainty will heartily maintain, and Dr. *T.* in his Preface to his Sermons *p.* 29. in expreſs terms blames me for expecting in the Grounds of Faith.

And whereas he ſays, *'tis abſurd to ſay that thoſe who are Certain of what they believe, may at the ſame time not know but it may be Falſe.* I grant it *abſurd*; nay more, I affirm that in caſe they be truly Certain, that is, in caſe their Certainty be taken from the *Thing* or *Object*, then not only *they may not know at the ſame time, but it may be Falſe*, but not at *any time* ever afterwards, unleſs the thing it ſelf hap to be *in that regard* Alterable. For true Certainty is built on the thing's *being as it is*, and nothing can *ever* be truly known to *be otherwiſe than it is*: But, if he takes Certainty in a wrong ſenſe for a *Firm Aſſent* to a *Thing as True*, however that Aſſent be grounded; then, though upon ſuppoſition he *firmly Aſſents*, he cannot at the very ſame time be ſhaken in that Aſſent or

not

not firmly Assent, yet he is far in that case from any *Knowledge* or *Intellectual Certainty* one way or other: because he regards not the *Thing* or *Object*, whence only true Knowledge can be had, whatever he *deems* or *imagines* concerning the truth of that which he firmly assents to. Lastly, these Excuses are quite besides the purpose: I never accused their *thoughts*; They are beyond the reach of my sight; but their *Discourse* and *Writings* I can see, and discover that they make Faith *possible to be False*, as I have shown at large in *Reason against Railery*: I meddle not then with what they *assent* to, or whether or no they *can* or *do* hold the contrary; what I objected was that their *words* in their books imported the *possible Falshood of Faith*: for which they yet owe satisfaction to all Christians for the common Injury done to Faith, and as yet they have given none at all.

26. *Whatever necessarily proves a thing to be true, does at the same time prove it Impossible to be False; because 'tis Impossible the same thing should be* True *and* False *at the same time: Therefore they who assent firmly to the Doctrin of the Gospel as true, do thereby declare their belief of the Impossibility of the Falshood of it.*

The first part I easily grant, and the reason for it to be most valid. And, for the same reason, I expect he will in counterchange grant me this Proposition, that *whatever words say, prove or imply a thing possible to be False, do at the same time say, prove, or imply that 'tis not necessarily true.* And then Dr. T. must consider how he will avoid the force of it, who makes Scripture the *sole Rule of Faith*, or the *only* means for Mankind to be *assur'd* of their Faith, and yet (*Rule of Faith*, p. 118.) professes that both the *Letter* and *Sense* of it are *possible to be otherwise* than the Protestants take them to be; which, in case they take their sense of Scripture or Faith to be *True*, must mean, *possible to be otherwise than True*, that is, *possible to be False*. Whether his own contrary Positions hang together or no, is not my Concern.

As for his Inference, I deny that *assenting* (being an Interiour Act) *is declaring* ones *belief*. But I suppose he meant it thus. *Therefore they who* [declare they] *assent firmly to the doctrin of the Gospel as True, do thereby declare their belief of the Impossibility of the Falsehood of it*; and thus, this is readily also granted; only in requital I expect he *should* (for I am sure he *must*) grant me this counter-proposition, that *therefore they who declare their belief of the possibility of Falshod in Faith and it's Grounds, or of the Letter and Sense of the Gospel,*

Gospel, do thereby declare they do not assent firmly to the doctrin of the Gospel as true. Which done, let Dr. *St.* and his Friend look to the Consequences of it. It lies *still* very heavy upon their Credit as Writers, and ever *must* till they retract it. No sincere Protestant who loves *his Faith* more then *their Writings*, will ever be brought to *endure* it, if he once set himself seriously to *consider* it.

27. *The Nature of Certainty doth receive several Names, either according to the nature of the proof or the degrees of the Assent. Thus* Moral Certainty *may be so called, either as it is opposed to Mathematical Evidence, but implying a firm Assent upon the highest Evidence that Moral things can receive; Or, as it is opposed to higher degrees of Certainty in the same kind. So* Moral Certainty *implyes only greater* Probabilities *of one side than the other; In the former sense we assert the* Certainty *of Christian Faith to be* moral, *but not only in the latter.*

This Principle is pernicious to *Human Nature* as well as to *Faith*, and destructive to *all Principles* in the world that are *true* ones and not like it self.

First, it designs to give us the *several Names* which the *nature of Certainty doth receive*, but it does indeed acquaint us with some

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species or *kinds* of Certainty, unless he will say that the *moral Certainty* he assignes to Faith is of the same kind with *Probability*, which I perceive he is loath to own. Next, to what purpose is it to discourse of *one* or *more* sorts of Certainty or to *distinguish* it's Notion, unless we first knew the Common notion of *Certainty* it self. The word *Moral* which is one of it's *Differences*, and chiefly intended to be explained here is hard enough of it self *alone*; but when to this shall be added a new difficulty of not knowing what [*Certainty*] which is the *Genus* means, we are like to make a wise business of it. Now, all the Knowledge we have hitherto gain'd of *Certainty* in a discourse purposely intended to make us understand the Certainty of *Faith*, is this, that 'tis *a firm Assent to a thing as true*, and that there may be a *Fallible Certainty*, both manifestly imply'd in his discourse: where, all that we can gather of the Nature of Certainty by the *former*, is that perhaps 'tis a *fixing* or *resting* in some Tenet *without any ground*; and by the later that 'tis a Chimæra or Nonsense. Thirdly, he distinguishes *Certainty according to the nature of the Proof, or the degree of the Assent*, but I vehemently deny it as the most absurd Position imaginable, that there can be *any* kind of Certainty taken from the *degrees of the Assent* in contradistinction to *the nature*

of

of the Proof, for this would make as if the *Subject*'s or person's assenting *more* or *less* did constitute some Certainties without any *kind* of nature of *Proof*, that is without *any* regard had to the *Object*.

After this he acquaints us with *one* kind of [*Moral Certainty*] *which*, he says is opposed to *Mathematical Evidence*. Now I neither discern how *Moral* and *Mathematical* come to be opposite to one another, more then *Moral* or *Physical*, and *Metaphysical* or *Theological*; less do I see how *Certainty* and *Evidence* have such an Opposition and Antipathy; I thought they might have been both on the same side: but I conceive that the goodness of Natural Reason made him at unawares joyn *Certainty* to *Moral*, and *Evidence* to *Mathematical*; thereby confessing that this Moral Certainty, (as he apprehends it) is indeed the Issue of no kind of *Evidence* at all but of meer *Obscurity*, or at best of some conjectural glance of Likelihood. But he *describes* or gives us some *distinct* Knowledge of this *Moral Certainty*, telling us that it *implies a firm Assent upon the highest Evidence that Moral things can receive*, and this he assigns to *Christian Faith*. Where, first I would know whether this *Moral* Certainty here mention'd, be an *Infallible Certainty*, or a *Fallible* one; and I presume he will answer 'tis a *Fallible* one,

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for *Infallible* and *Moral* Certainty are opposite; which is a fair beginning towards the *aſcertaining* Faith. Next, I would deſire him to ſpeak out candidly and tell me whether this *Moral* Certainty put Faith abſolutely out of *poſſibility of being Falſe*; or whether, notwithſtanding this *Certainty*, it may with Truth be ſaid, that ſtill *abſolutely ſpeaking* all Chriſtian Faith may be an *Error* or *Miſtake* of the world. I preſume he will not ſay 'tis abſolutely Impoſſible it ſhould be all a Miſtake becauſe 'tis ſo protected by this Moral Certainty; for he makes this a *leſs* degree of Certainty than Mathematical Certainty is, and Dr. *T.* has told us there can be no degrees in Abſolute Impoſſibilities; beſides, I ſee not how a *Fallible* Certainty can eſtabliſh any Tenet *Impoſſible to be Falſe*, for an *Infallible* Certainty, which is incomparably *above* that, can do *no more*. And yet, for all that, 'tis dangerous to his Credit, (for 'tis indeed blaſphemous) to ſay that *all Chriſtian Faith may poſſibly be a lying Impoſture for any thing any man living knows*; or that *all the Chriſtians in the world, though relying and proceeding to their power on the Means God has appointed to eſtabliſh them in True Faith, may notwithſtanding be poſſibly in an Error*. I ſuppoſe then he will recurr to his late excuſe and tell us, that *no man who firmly aſſents to any thing as true can at*

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the same time entertain any suspicion of it's Falshood. But this is nothing to our purpose. 'Tis not his *Judgment* but his *Doctrin* which stands impeach't; not his *Thoughts*, but his *Words*, and *Discourses*; let him clear *those* to the world, and I am to remit *secret* things to God and his own Conscience. I leave then him and his Friend to shuffle about for better Evasions, which I am sure can never be candid and Scholar-like, but some learned quirks and Jeers, and addres my self to a farther examination of this worthy Principle. 3*ly*, then I would ask, whether the *Firmness* of this Assent which he says here Moral Certainty *implies*, be taken from the *Object*, or from the *Subject*? I suppose he will say *here* from the Object, because he says 'tis *upon the highest Evidence Moral things can receive*; but I perceive him dispos'd even whilehe says so to blame the Things for *receiving no more*. I doubt he should rather blame *himself* for *receiving* no more from those Moral Objects, who are both *as able* and *as ready* to afford him *perfect* Evidence as perhaps any other things in Nature, did he dispose himself to receive it. For, are not *Moral* things as firmly establisht in their respective determinate natures as *Natural* and *Mathematical* things, from which Establishment *all* our *Science* is taken? Is not a *will* as Certainly a *will*, and *Liberty* as

neceſſarily *Liberty* as a *Triangle* is a *Triangle*? Again, are not *Voluntary*, *Liberty*, *Virtue*, *Vice* and ſuch like, very Intelligible words, aud conſequently the Natures of *Moral* things *Knowable* as well as others in other Sciences. I wonder then why the *Evidences* of Moral things cannot be as *high* as that of Mathematical things, ſince the natures of both are *equally Firm*, both natures can be *known*, and ſo engaged in our diſcourſes *of* them and *from* them, and *all ſcience* or *Evidence* ſprings from engaging the *Natures of things*.

The Sum then is, Dr. *St.* hath given Faith excellent good words, in telling us it's Moral Certainty *implys a firm Aſſent upon the higheſt Evidence Moral things can receive*: but, looking to the bottom of his meaning, he intends it only a *Fallible Certainty* or ſuch as *may* ſtill permit it to be *Falſe*; and ſo the right deſcant upon his fine words is in true conſtruction this. He allows Faith ſuch a *Certainty* as is *Uncertain*; ſuch a *Firmneſs* as may both *bow* and *break*; ſuch an *Evidence* in it's Grounds as is *Obſcure*, and conſequently makes it ſuch an *Aſſent* as is *Irrational*: All which and much more muſt needs follow from this rejecting *Infallible Certainty* in the Gronnds of Faith. If he thinks I wrong him, let us put it to the teſt; Let him take the beſt of thoſe *Evidences* or Proofs which

which ground his Moral Certainty, and put it with the help of a little Logick into a Syllogiſm or two, and then tell me whether it does neceſſarily conclude the Truth of Faith or no. If it *concludes*, why does he not ſay Faith is *abſolutely Certain*, but mince it with *Moral*? If it concludes *not*, how can all the world avoid but his pretended *Evidence* is *Obſcure*; his pretended *Certainty* built on that Evidence, *Uncertain*; the *Firmneſs* of that Aſſent, *Infirm*; and the *Aſſent* it ſelf to a Concluſion thus unprov'd, and no ways Evident (in a man capable to comprehend what ought in due of Right Reaſon cauſe *Aſſent*) privatively *Irrational*, or Faulty.

28. *A Chriſtian being thus Certain, to the higheſt degree of a firm Aſſent, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, his Faith is thereby reſolved into the Scriptures as into the Rule and Meaſure of what he is to believe; as it is into the veracity of God as the Ground of his believing what is therein contained.*

A Chriſtian who is *no better* Certain then *thus*; that is by Grounds allowing only ſuch a Certainty as is not abſolutely or truly *Concluſive* of the *Truth* of Faith (as Dr. *St.* intends no more by his *Moral* Certainty) is *not* Certain *at all*: As appears farther by the next words, *Certain* [*to the higheſt degree*

of a firm Assent.] the meaning of which must be that this *highest degree of a firm Assent* either is the *same* with the *Certainty* he intends his Faith according to his former doctrin, and *constitutes* or *explicates* it; or else that at least it helps to *make up* this Certainty, that is *perfect* it within it's notion, and make it *more* a Certainty or a *better* Certainty; which makes the Conclusiveness or Evidence had from the Object needless to create a Certainty, and signifies thus much in plain Terms [*Think or imagine what you will, so you imagine it strongly, and hold it stifly, you are as Certain of it as may be.*] Had he said, *A Christian is or may be thus Certain by such a Proof had from the Object as was truly Conclusive of the Thing*, how Genuin, Coherent & Clear had his Expression been, which now is forc't; Incongruous and Obscure? how Agreeable to Reason and the nature of *Certainty* as all Mankind understands it; which now is most Irrational and Unsuitable to the same Nature? How Honourable and Creditable had it been to his Cause, and to himself too as a Writer? But men that have not *Truth* on their side, and consequently are quite destitute of sound *Principles* and true *Grounds*, must not dare to speak Sense. Himself told us (*Princ.* 20.) that *the nature of Assent is agreeable to the Evidence we have of it in our Minds*, let him remember then that *the highest degree*

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of a firm Aſſent requires in reaſon *the higheſt gree of Clear Evidence* to beget it, which yet he lately deny'd to be had from *Moral* things, and attributed it peculiarly to the *Mathematicks*. So that all is Incoherent, all is Common and big words, hollow and ſo of a loud and high Sound, but without any determinate Senſe.

Again, how does it follow, that becauſe a Chriſtian is *thus Certain that the Scriptures are the Word of God*, that therefore *his Faith is thereby reſolved into the Scriptures as into the Rule and Meaſure of what he is to believe?* There is not the leaſt ſhow of conſequence for this, unleſs he had firſt prov'd that God had intended to ſpeak ſo clear in the Scripture as every private Underſtanding ſhould not fail of being ſecur'd from miſtake while it rely'd upon It; as alſo that God had ſpoken to us no other way but by the written Word, which he *has* no where prov'd, nor *can* ever prove. And, if the former of theſe (as experience tels us 'tis) be wanting, 'tis not a *Rule* to thoſe Perſons; if the latter, 'tis not neceſſarily the *Meaſure* of what they are to believe.

29. *No Chriſtian can be oblig'd under any pretence of Infallibility to believe any thing as a matter of Faith, but what was revealed by God himſelf in that Book wherein he believes*

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his Will to be contained, and consequently is bound to reject whatsoever is offer'd to be imposed upon his Faith which has no foundation in Scripture, or is contrary thereto; which Rejection is no making Negative Articles of Faith, but only applying the general Grounds of Faith to particular Instances, as because I believe nothing necessary to Salvation, but what is contain'd in Scripture, therefore no such particular things which neither are there nor can be deduc't thence.

If Christians were bound to hold that God had reveal'd his *whole* Will in that Book, and this *so clearly* that *all* or *most* Christians could not miss of understanding it right so as thereby to be *absolutely Certain of their Faith*, then indeed the first half of his Principle here runs very currently and smoothly: but these rubs lying still in the way which Dr. *St.* has not in the least remov'd, they being also satisfy'd by the General Conceit of Christianity, and by the Nature and *Genius* of Christian Faith, that it cannot possibly be an *Error* or *Lye*, and, consequently, must have such Grounds as cannot possibly permit all the world to be *in* an Errour while they rely on them, that is, Grounds which are *Infallibly secure*, and, on the other side, observing both by experience and Reason that Scripture *is not* such a Ground as that private Understandings applying

plying to it, are thereby perserv'd from possibility of erring (as Dr. *St.* also confesses in his next Principle) hence they are invited strongly to conceive that God has left some Persons on earth easily to be found who may supply what is wanting of Clearness to Scriptures Letter in the highest Points of Faith; and that God will *some* way or *other* perserve them from *erring*, and that while thus protected by God's signal Providence (whether this be performed Naturally, Supernaturally, or both wayes) they *cannot Erre* in that Affair, or in acquainting us with right Faith. So that, unless Dr. *St.* make out solidly that Scripture has in it the true nature of the *Rule of Faith, of it self* and without needing any Church, he must expect in reason that the very nature of Faith will necessarily incline all sincere persons, who have due care of their souls and of finding out true Faith, to beleeve the *Infallibility of the Church.*

And, whereas he says that their *rejection of such Points which have no Foundation in Scripture or are contrary thereto is no making New Articles of Faith, but only applying the General Grounds of Faith to particular Instances*, he discourses therein very consonantly to his own Grounds were they worth any thing; Yet, I have one thing to propose to his Consideration, which is,

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that to juſtify his Reformers he muſt produce Grounds full as good or rather *better* for the *Rejection* of thoſe Points as for his *Faith*; or to ſpeak more diſtinctly, he muſt have *as* perfect (or rather *perfecter*) Certainty for theſe two Propoſitions [*Nothing it to be believed which has no Foundation in Scripture*] and [*This* or *that rejected Point has no Foundation in Scripture*] as he has for any point of Chriſtian Faith For, ſince upon the Evidence they had of theſe two Propoſitions they diſobey'd and rebell'd againſt their then-lawful Superiours and Church Paſtors, and broke Church-Union, which was evidently forbidden by God's Law, and ſo the preſerving Union & obeying them, is a point of Faith, and which themſelves confeſs *is* ſuch and binds them *as ſuch* in caſe the reaſons for their impoſing New points be not valid; that is, if theſe two Propoſitions on whoſe Evidence they rely'd when they alledged they were wrongfully impos'd, and thence rejected them, be not *True* ; it follows that they muſt at leaſt have *equal* Evidence (nay *more*, for bare *Equality* would only *Balance* them in a doubtful *ſuſpence* between either ſide) that thoſe Propoſitions on which they grounds their Rejection of thoſe Articles, and diſobedience to their Paſtours aad Superiours, are *True*, as they have for their Faith. And, if the Grounds of this Rejection

ction ought to be *more* Certain then the Grounds of their Faith, there is either some thing wrong in the pretended Grounds of their Faith, or elſe their *Negative Articles* ought to be allow'd the honour of being *Points of Faith* too, ſince their *greater* Certainty gives them fair and equal Title to it, if not Abſolute *Preeminence*.

30. *There can be no better way to prevent mens miſtakes in the ſenſe of Scripture (which men being Fallible are ſubject to) than the conſidering the conſequence of miſtaking in a matter wherein their ſalvation is concern'd: and there can be no ſufficient reaſon why that may not ſerve in matters of Faith, which God himſelf hath made uſe of as the means to keep them from Sin in their lives: Unleſs any imagine that Errours in Opinion are far more dangerous to mens ſouls then a vicious life is, and therefore God is bound to take more care to prevent the one then the other.*

The Dr. being conſcious to himſelf that he had, notwithſtanding all his promiſes to reduce Faith to Principles, and to prove it's Certainty, left it ſtill *Uncertain*, thought it his beſt Expedient to cloſe his blinde Principles with a *ſpeeding* one, which (to the ſhame of all Principles) ſhould maintain that it *need not be Certain*; though he couch-

es this ſenſe *warily* as it behooves him.

He ſeems to ground his Sceptical Diſcourſe on this, that *Men are Fallible*, and ſo *ſubject to miſtake the ſence* of the Scriptures. I wiſh he would ſpeak out once in his life and tell us plainly whether all Mankinde be *Fallible in every thing*, or only in *ſome things*, and in *ſome* Circumſtances? Again, whether he means that men are *naturally* Fallible, or *ſupernaturally*, that is by means of God's Infinite Power, if it ſhould ſet it ſelf to deceive them. If the later, 'tis not, nor ought to be our Queſtion; for no man who has any Reverence for God or his Attributes, will ever think that he will do *Miracles* ſtill to leade Mankind into *Errour*, but rather judge it becomes his Goodneſs to provide, in caſe the Good of the world or the Church ſhould require that ſome extraordinary thing be done, that Mankind ſhould have notice of it by ſome Certain way to prevent his Erring, as it happens in the caſe of the Euchariſt. Taking him then to mean that man is *naturally Fallible*, we enquire further; Is all Mankind (however *one* ſence or *another* accidentally may be inſincere in one or another particular) yet is *all* Mankind naturally Fallible in their daily Senſations, or which is all one, are the Senſes of all Mankind ſo fram'd as to convey wrong Impreſſions into his Knowing Power? If not, they *cannot*

not erre *naturally*: nor do I think Dr. *St.* will ſay our Senſes *thus* and in *this* are *Fallible*; If he does, I know not what to ſay of him; which is, that he is a perfect Pyrrhonian and unworthy of Mankind's Converſation or Diſcourſe with him; for, to what end ſhould men diſcourſe with him, if, all his Senſes being Fallible, himſelf knows not whether they diſcourſe or no? I ask ſtill further, Are men *naturally Fallible* in ſome things not had immediately from ſenſe, for example, in knowing that the world was on foot a year before we were born? or in Firſt Principles, as *Æquale eſt æquale ſibi*, *An Equal equal to it ſelf*? Or in a Concluſion immediately depending on *ſuch* Principles, as that *therefore three lines drawn from the Center to the Circumference are equal*, and ſuch like? I think he will not ſay it. We ſee then Men are capable of Infallibility or Certainty of their own nature: wherefore they can aim at it and deſire it, eſpecially in Faith, which is of ſo high a Concern to their Souls and the *baſis* of all their Spiritual Building, therefore, both for *that* Reaſon and very many *others* recounted and inforced by me in *Faith Vindicated* and elſewhere, they *ought* to *have* this Certainty (eſpecially ſince the *Truth* of Faith is neither Proveable, Maintainable nor profeſſible without it) in caſe ſuch a Certainty be not in it ſelf Impoſſible,

and that *'tis not* ſo, I have ſaid ſomething both in my *Reaſon againſt Raillery*, p.64. to 67. and p.112. to p.116. as alſo in this preſent Treatiſe in my Anſwer to the 27. Principle.

But, ſetting this aſide, we will proceed and demand ſtill farther; Are men deceivable in knowing what one another means in ordinary Converſation or domeſtick affairs? Can the Matter and the Man the Miſtreſs and her Maid underſtand one another? Or, in caſe ſome ambiguous Expreſſion intermingle it ſelf, cannot the Speaker upon the other's ſignifying his diſſatisfaction, abſolutely clear his doubt, and make himſelf be throughly underſtood? Experience tels us they can, and that they may as eaſily be miſtaken in their Senſations as in ſuch kinde of Expreſſions. We ſee then Men are Infallible in many things, and even in underſtanding *words* aright in ſame caſes. If then they be Fallible in underſtanding Scriptures, and this in the main and Fundamental Points of Chriſtianity, as was ſhown above, 'tis evident this Fallibility is not to be refunded totally into the *Subject* or *Man* (ſince he is capable of *Infallible* Certainty in *other* things) but into the want of Clearneſs in the Letter of Scripture (as to ſuch Points) in proportion to private Underſtandings, and conſequently that it was ne-

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ver intended by God for their *Rule of Faith*; ſince, though both ſides rely on this, yet one (even while doing thus) is ſtill in an Errour; and ſuch an Errour as is a Hereſie.

Since then what we hold is, that men are Infallible *in affairs* belonging to Faith, and this while they rely on the Grounds left by God for them to embrace Faith, I would ask him in a word, whether he holds *all* men *may be deceived* in that very affair *even while they do this to the beſt of their power*? If he ſays they *can*, 'tis unavoidable *all* the Chriſtian *world* may poſſibly be now in an *Errour*, and *all* Chriſtian Faith be a *meer lye*: As alſo, 'tis evident, that in that caſe God would have left no ordinary means to ſecure his *Church* or any man in it from Errour; & laſtly, that God *leads men* into Errour, ſince they acting to the beſt of their Power (as is ſuppoſed) their Errour cannot be refunded into *them* but into the defectiveneſs of thoſe *Means*, that is their want of Perſpicuity or ſufficient Plainneſs to their addicted and faithfully-endeavouring Underſtandings, even as to thoſe main Points.

Thus much to ſhow how craftily Dr. *St.* to avoid reflexion on the Unfitneſs of the *Rule* he aſſigns, puts it only upon *men's* being *Fallible*, and how unreaſonably he behaves himſelf in ſo doing: Let us now ſee how he provides againſt this Fallibility leſt other-

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wise *all Mankind* should erre in their Faith. He tels us that there can be no better way to prevent men's mistakes in the sense of Scripture, which men being Fallible are subject to, than the *considering the consequence of mistaking in a matter wherein their Salvation is concern'd.* Well, put this *Consideration* in men, are any of them by vertue thereof yet *Infallible*, or secur'd from erring in understanding Scripture? If not, *all mankind* may yet according to his Grounds be in an Errour in matters belonging to Faith, and so *all Christian Faith* may still *possibly be False*, notwithstanding all the Provision put by him to secure *them* and *It*. But if this render them absolutely secure from Erring, then we may hope *God's Church* too may have the grace given her by God as well as a *private* man, to *consider the consequence of mistaking also*, I am sure it as much concerns *her*, and so the Church (or, as he cals it *a Society of men*) may also be Infallible in *understanding* and *explaining* Scripture; and, by this means, we are come about again to an *Infallible Proponent*, which we have so zealously labour'd to avoid. In a word, after he has put all Means left by God to be Certain of our Faith, and all the diligence and care possible to be used by man to lay hold on those means, let him either acknowledge that any particular man in the world,

and so *a fortiori* God's Church or any *Society of men* exactly following & relying on those Means to arrive at right Faith, is by so doing *Infallible* in that thing or in interpreting Scripture, and by consequence that Christian Faith is *Infallibly Certain*, or else confess that, notwithstanding all means us'd, all *Christian Faith* is still either *not Certain at all*, or else *Fallibly Certain*; which is a peece of most profound Nonsense; and, were it sense, signifies plain *all may be False*.

The later half of this Principle, is still more admirable Nonsense than the former, and shows how meanly he is verst in solid Divinity, he conterposes there the Certainty in *matters of Faith*, to *that which God has made use of as the means to keep men from Sin in their lives*; as if *Faith* were not intended by God to make men *Virtuous* and the *Certainty of Faith* the most *effectual* part of those *means*. But because I see Dr. *St.* though he have a very good witt, yet by reason of his sole Application to *verbal Divinity*, which never reaches the Ground or Bottom of any thing it talks of, is very Ignorant of what is meant by Christian Life and it's opposite Vice, or Sin, I will take a little pains to inform him better. He may please then to know that it suting best with God's Wisdom to govern the world by way of *Causes* and *Effects*, he carries on the course of his *Ordi-*

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nary Providence even in *Supernaturalls* by means of *Diſpoſitions* The whole deſign then of his Goodneſs is to plant thoſe diſpoſitions in our Soul by means of Religion as may make us moſt comfortable to himſelf, that ſo *Aſcenſiones in corde noſtro diſponendo, aſceendamus de virtute in virtutem donec videatur Deus Deorum in Sion.* That is, by Ordering thoſe riſing Steps in our heart we may aſcend from Virtue to Virtue till the God of Gods be ſeen in Sion. Hence the life of a Chriſtian, as ſuch, is *ſpiritual*, and the Proper way for him to worſhip God is in *ſpirit*, that is by Spiritual Acts or Habits to perfect his Soul, or that part in us which is Spiritual, and diſpoſe is for Heaven; But *Errour* is alſo *ſpiritual*, and yet is far from perfecting our Soul, therefore *Truth* muſt go along with it, and ſo we are to worſhip God in *ſpirit* and *Truth*; Hence, the firſt of virtues, in priority of Nature is true *Knowledge* of God, and of the motives or means to attain him, and the only way for the Generality to arrive at theſe is by *believing* his Divine Authority upon ſome way of *Revelation* which gives his Church and by her and all others Abſolute Certainty 'tis engaged; by which means we are perfectly ſecure that what we proceed upon is God's ſenſe, or Truth, which is the *Baſis* of all our Spiritual building. Out of theſe *Knowledges* are act

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to spring *Adoration*, *Reverence*, *Hope*, and *Love* of him above all things, in Christian Language call'd *Charity*, the *Queen* of all *Vertues*, (*major autem horum Charitas*, says St. *Paul*) and out of this *Love of God above all things*, Love of our Neighbour as our self; in the heartiness of which, or the having that Rational disposition in our hearts to do as we would be done to, consists the keeping all the Commandments of the Second Table; which is also *our* good; for, so, more undisturb'd by Passion, or vexation from the Exteriour World whose order we violate in transgressing against these, we are more free to practice those other vertues which are to elevate us towards Heaven and fit us according to the measure of out pitch appointed by God, for the Attainment of Bliss. Hence is seen what is meant by *sin* or *vice*; For, this, being formally a *defect*, is only a *want* of the opposit good Disposition or *Virtue*. The chief Vice then is *Hatred* of God, or a very sleighting and perfectly deliberate dis-regard & Posthabition of his Incomparable self, our Final Bliss, to a Creature; next, *Despair*, *Irreverence*, *Infidelity*, totally, as in *Heathenism*, or in some particular, as *Turcism*, *Judaism*, *Heresy*: In the last place comes the *want* of that due *Love* of our *Neighbour* for God's sake as leaves our Will disposed (as far as that motive carries us) to

do him any injury for our own temporal Convenience; in which consists the violation of the Commandments of the Second Table. Insomuch as, though a man commits not one of those Acts there forbidden, out of the motive of Worldly Honour, Civility, Fear or any other such like, yet if he wants that rightly-grounded Interiour Love of his Neighbour and builds not his Avoidance of harming him on *that* motive, that is, if he be dispos'd to commit them *all* for any thing that motive would hinder him, however in the sight of man or *Exteriourly* he keeps those Commandments, yet is he guilty of them all *Interiourly* or in the sight of God.

To apply this then to our present purpose. 'Tis seen hence that Faith is the *Basis* of all virtuous Life, and consequently the want of it the *ruin* of all *virtue* and the ready way to all *Vice* and *sin*: For, *external* Acting or Avoiding are nothing to Christian virtue, unless they spring from a Christian motive: and 'tis only Faith which gives us those Motives; and the stability, well-groundedness or *Truth* of *Faith*, which renders those Motives effectual. Wherefore, unless the Faithful be *materially Infallible* while they believe God has revealed such and such things, that is, unless God did indeed reveal them, and so their Faith be really *True*; all *Gods worship* and *Good life* is ill-built, ruinous

inous and fals to the Ground: And unleſs *ſome* of them, or thoſe who are *capable* to underſtand it to be True, be *formally* Infallible, it would work leſs effectually in all thoſe who ſhould reflect that they ſaw not but it might be Falſe, or be made ſo reflect by others who were enemies to Faith; nor could the *Truth* of Chriſtian Faith be defended, or made out, or be Juſtifiably recommended to others as *True*, nor with Wiſdom and Honeſty be *profeſt* True, by thoſe who judge themſelves capable to look through it's Grounds and yet ſee nothing *Concluſive* of *Truth* in them. Wherefore this *Fallible Certainty* of his deſtroys all Efficacy, all Defence and even Eſſence of Faith, and conſequently radically ſubverts and overthrows all Chriſtian Virtue, and all true Goodneſs. Which, I atteſt the *Authour* and *Finiſher of our Faith*, is the true reaſon why I with ſo much zeal and Earneſtneſs oppoſe him and his Friend, for advancing *Uncertainty*, and conſequently *Scepticiſm in Faith*, however they and their angry paſſionate party are pleas'd to apprehend me.

I perceive Dr. *St.* will hope to evade by ſaying that Chriſtian virtue may be upheld by the Certainty we have of *ſome* Points of Faith, though *others* be *Uncertain*: which Points, to make his Uncertainty of Faith go down the better, he cals here *Opinions*. But,

if he means by *Opinions* the Tenets of a Trinity, Christs Godhead and Presence in the B. Sacrament (all most highly concerning Christian Life one way or other) in which we discern great parties differing who all admit the Scripture and use the best means to interpret it as far as we can perceive; nay, and *consider the consequence of mistaking* too, which he makes the very best means of all: If, I say, these and such as these be the *Opinions* he speaks of, and counterposes them to *means to keep men from sin in their lives*; and that the Rule of Faith he assigns leaves whol Bodies of Reliers on it in actual Errour in such Fundamental Points of Faith and of most high concernment to good life, as has been shown, even while they proceed upon it; 'tis evident 'tis *not* the Rule God intended his Church and mankinde to build their Faith on, and so none can presume of security of mistake by relying purely upon it; but all of Concern not known before by some other means, that is all which it alone holds forth, may be also liable to be a mistake likewise; unless some other Authority more ascertainable to us then it *abets* it's *Letter* in such passages as are plain because they are either meerly Moral or Narrative; or explain it's *sense* in *others* which are more *spiritual* and *supernatural* and so more *peculiar* and *Fundamental* to Christianity.

Recapitulation.

To meet with the absurd Positions *express* or else *imply'd* in the Doctrin deliver'd here by Dr. *St.* in these last Eleven Principles of his, I take leave to remind the Reader of these few opposit Truths establisht in my former Discourse.

1. *That Assent call'd* Faith, *taken as built on the Motives left by God to light Mankind to the Knowledge of his Will,* (*that is taken as it ought to be taken, and as 'tis found in the Generality*) *is for that Reason Absolutely* (*that is,* more then morally) *Certain, or* Impossible to be False.

2. *Though the Nature of Assent depend* immediatly *on the Evidence we have of it in our minds when 'tis Rational; yet in case it be* True, *as the Assent of Faith* ought *to be, it must necessarily be built and depend* fundamentally *on the nature of the Thing; since without dependance on* It, *this Evidence it self cannot possibly be had.*

3. *A man may be* materially *Infallible, or out of possibility of being actually deceiv'd in judging the divine Authority is engag'd, by adhering to* another's *Judgment who is Infallible, or in the right in thus judging, though he penetrate not the reason* why *that other man* comes to be *Infallible. Also he who is* thus *Infallible*

lible, being in possession of those Truths (relievd upon the Divine Authority as the Formal motive of believing them) which Truths as Principles beget those good Affections *in him in which consist our* Christian *Life:* such *a man, I say, has consequently enough (speaking abstractedly) for the* Essence *of Saving Faith, though he be not* Formally *or knowingly Infallible by penetrating the* Conclusiveness *of the* Grounds *of Faith.*

4. *To be thus* materially *Infallible, or thus in the right in judging the Divine Authority is engag'd, is* requisite *and* necessary *for the* Essence *of Faith; otherwise the believing upon the Divin Authority when 'tis* not engag'd, *and so perhaps the believing and holding firmly to abominable* Errours *and* Hereticall *Tenets might be an Act of* Faith; *to assert which, is both* absurd *and* most impious.

5. *'Tis requisite to the* Perfection *of Faith to be* formally *or Knowingly Infallible that the Divine Authority is engag'd. For, since it hazards* Heresy *and* Errour *to judge that the Divine Authority is engag'd for any point when 'tis not, it ought to breed* suspence *and* caution *in Reflecters till they* see *it engag'd: & consequently the better they see this the more certainly they are apt to assent to the point upon the Divine Authority: So that the* Absolute Certainty *of the Grounds which* conclude *the Divine Authority engag'd,* betters *and*

strengthens

ſtrengthens *the Act of Faith.*

6. *However it be enough for the Faith of thoſe whoſe downright rudeneſs lets them not reflect at all, to be only* Materially *Infallible that God's Authority is engag'd, yet 'tis beſides of* Abſolute neceſſity *to* Reflecters *who raiſe doubts, eſpecially for thoſe who are very acute, to diſcern ſome reaſon which* cannot deceive *them, or to be formally or knowingly Infallible that 'tis indeed actually engag'd for thoſe points. Otherwiſe it would follow that proviſion* enough *had been made by God to ſatisfy or cauſe ſaving Faith in* Fools, *and none at all to breed Faith* wiſe men; *which, without ſatisfaction in this, in point is impoſſible to be expected in ſuch through-ſighted Reflecters. The ſame* Formal *Infallibility is neceſſary for the wiſeſt ſort of men in the Church, both to* defend *Faith and* eſtabliſh *it's Grounds in a Scholar-like way, as alſo for their* Profeſſion *of the Truth of Faith, and other Obligations incumbent on them as Faithfull, and laſtly, for the Effects which are to be bred in them by Faith's Certainty.*

7. *Though then the* Rule of Faith *needs not to be actually* penetrated *by* all *the Faithfull while they proceed unreflectingly, yet it ought to be ſo qualifi'd that it may ſatisfy* all *who are apt to* reflect *and ſo to* doubt *of their Faith; that is, it's Ruling power ought to be penetrable or evidenceable to them if they come to doubt: and alſo ſo* connatural *and ſuitable to the* unelevated

elevated *and* unreflecting *thoughts of men of* all *sorts, that it be the most apt that maybe to* establish *the Faithfull in the mean time and* preserve *them from doubting of their Faith. Both these are found in Tradition, or Testifying Authority, and not in Scripture's Letter.* That *therefore*, *and not* This *is the Rule of Faith.*

8. Infallible *Certainty of Faith being rejected, the* Moral *Certainty he substitutes must either be a* Fallible *Certainty or* none; *this later is* Impious, *the former is* non-sense; *Wherefore all* Dr. St's *Discourse of Faith, while he rejects Infallibility, must forcibly have the* one *or the* other *of these Qualifications.*

9. *A* firm Assent to a thing as True *renders no man* Certain *of what he thus assents to; for so Heretick's might be truly Certain of all the pestilent Errours they hold, so they* but firmly assent they are True.

10. Faith *being the* Basis *of all Christian Virtues, on which all our spiritual Edifice is built, and from whence we derive* all *the Certainty we have of all that concerns it, ought by consequence be better grounded and firmer then* any *or* all *it's superstructures.* *Also, 'tis ill Divinity to counterpose* matters of Faith *to* the Means to keep men from sin in their lives, *since Matters of Faith or Christ's doctrin is the very best of those Means; or to pretend*

that

that Errours in Opinion (*I suppose he means in* Faith, *that being the point*) *are not* more dangerous to mens Souls than a vicious life; *for this supposes Faith* no *part of a* Christian Life, *nor Infidelity, Heresy, Judaism or Turcism to be* vices: *which, by consequence, degrades* Christian Faith *from being a* virtue, *contrary to the Sentiment of all Christianity since the beginning of the Church.*

I shall hope from any impartial and Intelligent Reader who is a *Christian*, that he will acknowledge these Positions of mine bear a *clear Evidence* either in *themselves*, or in their *Proofs*; and consequently, that the opposite ones advanc't either Explicitely or Implicitly by Dr. *St.* are both *Obscure* and (which is worse) *Untrue.*

The Total Account of Dr. St's *Principles.*

THus have I spoken distinctly and fully to Dr. *St's.* Principles. It were not amiss to sum up their merits in brief, and give a short character of them; that so it may be seen how infinitly short they fall of deserving so Honorable a Name. But, first, we are to speak a word or two to the *Principles agreed on by both sides:* of which the First and Third are great Truths, and the word, *God*

and *Obedience* due to God, now & then barely *nam'd*; but no kind of *Concluſions*, are drawn from thoſe two particular Propoſitions influential to the End intended, *viz. to reduce the Faith of the Proteſtants to Principles*; whence, though they are moſt Certain *Truths*, yet, as ſtanding here, they are *no Principles*.

The 2*d* and 4*th* which concern God's Attributes, are not at all us'd neither. For he cannot uſe them *alone* to evince Scripture's Letter is the *Rule*, unleſs he firſt prove that Scripture's Letter is the *fitteſt* for that End, and that therefore it become Gods's Attributes to chuſe it; which he no where does: and whereas he would argue thus, Princ. 7. *God hath choſen it for a Rule, therefore 'tis agreeable to his Attributes*; 'tis both *Frivolous*, becauſe all is already concluded between us if he proves God *has* choſen Scripture for that end, for then 'tis granted by *all* it *muſt* be agreeable to his Attributes; and alſo *Prepoſterous*, for he makes that the *Concluſion* which ſhould be, in caſe he argu'd from God's Attributes, the *Principle*: For his Argument ought, in that caſe, to run thus; Gods Wiſdom and Goodneſs has choſen that for a Rule which is *wiſeſt* and *beſt* to be choſen; but Scriptures Letter is ſuch; therefore he *has* choſen it for a Rule.

The 4*th* and 5*th* are either never made uſe of

of by him as Principles, or else they make directly against himself; For *Fallible* Certainty, only which, having discarded that which is Infallible, he sustains, can never make any one *know* what is God's will.

This is an ill beginning, and a very slender Success hitherto; let us see next whether he has better luck with his own Principles.

The first, taking the words literally and Properly as they ought to be taken in Principles, is *against himself:* for he confesses there that such a *way of Revelation is in it self necessary to our Intire Obedience to God's will, as may make us know what the will of God is*; but common sense tells us that *Fallible Certainty* (which only, having rejected *Infallible* Certainty he can maintain) is farr from making us *Know:* This Principle therefore is either *against himself*, or, if he means to go less by the word *Know* than what is apt absolutely and truly to ascertain, 'tis nothing to his purpose; for so, it can only settle *Opinion* and not *Faith.*

The second is Useless, Impertinent, and in part False.

The Third is False and Impertinent to boot,

The Fourth is Ambiguous, and, taken in that sense, when distinguish't, which he seems to aym at, 'tis absolutely False.

The 5th is Absurd, Preposterous and against all Art, in putting us to argue from what's *less* known to what's *more* known; and withal totally False.

The 6th is Sophistically Ambiguous and in great part False.

The 7th builds on a groundless pretence, and contains a notorious Paralogism.

The 8th is to no purpose; for since (as appears in the Process of his discourse) he means by the words [*Certainly*] and [*Known*] only *Fallible Certainty* which is *none at all*, he cannot possibly advance by *such* a discourse towards the settling us a *Certain* Rule of Faith. Besides he either supposes Scripture, as it now stands, *Sufficient*, which is to beg the Question; or else, he confounds God's *Ordinary* Power working with the Causes now on foot in the world, which only concern'd the present point, with his *Extraordinary*, or what he can possibly effect by his Divine *Omnipitence*.

The 9th only Enumerates the several ways how God may be conceiv'd to make known his will; and, in doing so, either minces or else quite leaves out the *Tradition of Gods Church*: as if it were Unconceivable God should speak to men by their Lawfull Pastors in the Church; whereas yet himself must confess that in the *beginning* of the Church *Faith* either was signify'd and certify'd by *that* or *no* way. The

The 10*th* goes upon a False Supposition and includes two Fallaces, call'd by Logicians *non causa pro causa*, or assigning a *wrong* Cause, and omitting the *True* one; Also, 'tis in part False, in saying *words are equally capable of being understood spoken or written:* and lastly, it confounds again God's *Ordinary* Power with his Extraordinary.

The 11*th* makes account there is *no* benefit of Divine Writings but in being *the Rule of Faith*, which is against Common sense and daily Experience.

The 12*th* comes home to the point; but 'tis perfectly Groundless, Unprov'd, False, and as full of Absurdities of several sorts as it can well hold.

The 13*th* begins with a False Position, proceeds with a False and unprov'd Supposition, and endeavours to induce a most Extravagant Conclusion only from Premisses granted kindly by himself to himself without the least Proof.

The 14*th* contains *three* False and unprov'd Suppositions: *viz.* that God promis't his Church to deliver his *whole* will in Writings; or that the *Writers* of Scripture had any order from God to write his whole will *explicitly*; or, that the primitive Church believ'd it to have *such* a perfection as to signify (without needing the Church) *all* saying Truth to *every* sincere

ſincere Reader with *ſuch* a Certainty as is requiſit to *Faith*.

The 15*th* begins again with a Falſe and unprov'd Suppoſition, and draws thence a conſequence not contain'd in the Proof, and, in part, againſt the intereſt of his own Tenet; and, Laſtly, brings in confirmation of it an Inſtance which makes againſt himſelf.

The 16*th* putts upon Catholicks a Tenet they never held, and is wholly Falſe, Irrational and Abſurd: aſſuming *gratis* this poſition, that nothing but *Miracle* ought to ſerve, whether there be *other* Means laid or no; Or, that *no* Proof but *Miracle* can poſſibly be ſufficient to ſatisfy mens Reaſons in a thing *Subject to Reaſon*. For, the *Natural* Aſſiſtance of the Church is *ſuch* of it ſelf, and the *Suppernatural*, ſuppoſing the knowledge of *Sanctity* in the Church, is as plain Reaſon as that the greateſt motives to Goodneſs, and Interiour Goodneſs caus'd by thoſe motives, will make thoſe good men who have it act as *good* men ought and are apt to do.

The 17*th* proceeds wholly upon a Falſe Imputation laid on our Church, and on his confounding moſt abſurdly the notion of the *Church* with that of the *Schools*; or rather taking a *few* ſpeculative Divines, and

and thoſe the *weakeſt*, to be the *Church*.

The 18*th* is again built on an *unprov'd Suppoſition* (of which kind of Grounds he is ſtill very *free*) and on a falſely pretended promiſe from God ſo to ſecure any private-ſpirited Contemner of the Church that he ſhall be in the *way to Salvation* whether he *Erre* or *no*; though (as common ſenſe and the Order of the world gives it) he forfeit both his Reaſon and his Virtue by not hearing his Lawfull and Learned Paſtors rather than his ſelf-conceited Ignorant ſelf.

The 19*th* has the *ſame* Faults with the *former*, and is wholly Falſe, even though his own Suppoſition, mention'd in the cloſe, were freely granted him, which 'tis not.

The four Principles following are made up of theſe Errours. 1. That we hold that *no* man can have a True and *ſaving Faith* unleſs he *ſees* and *knows* that the Proponent is *Infallible*. 2. That the nature of Aſſent (when rational) depends *not* on the *Object*. 3. That one cannot have an Infallible *Aſſent* in *Faith* without Infallible Aſſiſtance to judge of the *Points* of Faith themſelves. 4. That there is no middle between *no particular perſon*, and *every particular perſon* being formally Infallible; whereas my Tenet is that ſome *muſt* be

ſo,

ſo, moſt *may* be ſo, and all *need not* be ſo. 5. That becauſe all muſt be *materially* Infallible, or in the true Faith, but know not *how* they are ſo; therefore 'tis uſeleſs that *any* ſhould *know* how to make out thoſe Grounds, to ſettle, explain, and defend Faith and it's Certainty. Theſe with his ſelf-contradiction are the jarring Elements which compound theſe four terrible Principles, with which he hopes to undermine and blow up the Churches *Infallibility*, and the abſolute *Certainty* of all *Chriſtian Faith*.

The *24th* gives good words in common of *Certainty* and *Evidence*, but he means by the former *Fallible* Certainty, by the Later only ſome Probability or Improbability, ſo it but *appears* ſo to the *Subject*. And is a total prevarication, from *Settling* the *Truth* of *Faith* to *not doubting* the Truth of the *Scripture*; of which there is no queſtion.

The *25th* holds forth a moſt wicked and groſs Abſurdity, deſtructive of *all* Certainty, Evidence, Faith, Chriſtianity, and even Man-hood, *viz. that to Aſſent firmly to any thing as True*, is to be *Certain* of it: And intimates two others, *viz.* that a man who is *now* Certain of a thing, may at *another* time know that thing to be Falſe, though not at the *ſame time*; as alſo, that *ſuch* a Certainty

tainty is competent for *Belief* or *Faith*.

The 26. speaks Evident Truth in the beginning of it, but is nothing available to his cause, but rather against him. The Inference thence is False, being defectively expreſt; and when rectify'd, is also a clear Truth, but highly prejudices himself.

The 27. is utterly destructive of common Sense, Certainty, Faith and Christianity.

The 28. *Principle* is a weak and inconsistent *Discourse*.

The 29. supposes Scriptures Intelligible *enough* in all Points of Faith *without* the Church, and to contain expreſly God's *whole* will, or every Article of Faith, or at least with such a Ground of it there as that 'tis deducible thence by private understandings with a Certainty competent for Faith; none of which he has at all prov'd, nor ever will.

The 30*th* and last confesses *all men* liable to *Error in Faith*, though relying on the Means left by God to secure them from it; which evidently makes that means to be *none*: and assigns a way for their *best* security; which all Erring Sects in the world (as far as we can discern) take, and yet still erre. And, lastly, for an Upshot, he makes account, like a Solid Divine, that our Christian Life is not at all Interiour, but only Exteriour; and, con-

sequently, that Faith is *no part* of a Christian's Life, nor the means to the *other* parts of it, nor Infidelity and Heresy a Sin or Vice; and then all's safe, and his Principles stand firm: for then 'tis evident that every private man may reject the *Church* at pleasure, and be sure to understand as much in Scripture as is *necessary to Salvation*; for, if these be *no* sins, and so do not damn a man either immediatly or mediatly, there is nothing that will. But indeed, in Dr. *St's* kind of Reformation, they are rather to be accounted Cardinal and Fundamental Virtues. Such Senseless Principles ought to produce no better Fruit; for this sutes their Practice and his Principles: Rebel against God's Church, break the most Sacred Order of the World, and do but talk stoutly and with a bold grace and a pretty way of Expression of Scripture and God's Word, and then all is *Holy* and *Good*.

Reflecting then back on the nature of Principles, and considering that to deserve that name they must necessarily have in them *two* Qualifications, *viz*. *Evidence* in themselves, and *Influence* upon some other Propositions which are to *derive* their Evidence from them; and it being manifest, both out of this short Review, and much more out of the full Replies to each of them, that not one of those which D. *St.* here cals *Principles*, but

but is either *Unevident* and *False*; or, if True, *Impertinent* and void of any the least Influence upon the Point he aym'd to prove by them: They are clearly convinc't to have nothing in them like Principles, or entitling them to the honour of that name; and that he might with far more reason have call'd them, Conceits, Paradoxes, Quodlibets, or Crotchets. And I know no better way for him to vindicate them, but to entreat his Fellow-Hater of Infallibility Dr. *T.* who has a special gift at * putting *Principles* into *Categorical* and *Hypothetical* Syllogisms, to undertake *these*; that so the world may see the rare consequences that arise from them; to which, lest he should fail his Friend, we now address.

* *See his Preface to his Sermons, p. last.*

The Sixth Examen of Dr. St's *Six Conclusions.*

ANy man, who had either heard of *Logick* or reflected a little upon *Nature*, would verily have thought that such *obscure* Principles should necessarily have produc't *more obscure* Conclusions, since the Evidence of the *Later*, being deriv'd only from the *former* and *participated* from them, must needs be found in a lesser degree of

Perfection in *these*, than is the Evidence of those former from whence 'tis borrow'd and caus'd. But herein consists Dr. *St's* Masterpiece; that though his Principles be never so *dark*, his Conclusions are yet as *light* as *Noon-day*. But I must not forestall the Reader's mirth. What I am to do is to declare in short what kind of things *Conclusions* ought to be; in doing which I will say no more than all men of Art in the world, and all who understand common reason will yeeld to be evident.

A Conclusion, then,

1. Is a Proposition which follows out of *Premisses* which are it's *Principles*.

2. The Knowledge of it's Verity depends on our knowing that the Premisses (it's Principles) are *True*.

3. Therefore, the verity of these *Premisses* must be *more known* to him whom we intend to convince of the *Truth* of the *Conclusion*, than is the Truth of the Conclusion it *self*; otherwise 'tis in vain to endeavour to convince him of *this* by the *other*.

4. The Consequence or *Following* of the Conclusion out of the Premisses, or the *Connexion* between them, must be made *known*; for if by vertue of this Coherence *it follow not* thence, it may be perhaps a great *Truth*, but 'tis not at all a *Conclusion*.

5. To do this, 'tis requisite that each *particular*

ticular Concluſion ſhould either be put *immediatly* after it's *particular* Premiſſes, or elſe be *related* to them; otherwiſe, how ſhall any one be able to judge whether they cohere or no, if he know not *what* things *are* to cohere.

Laſtly, the Concluſion muſt be ſuch as that in the *granting* it the *victory* of the Opponent conſiſts; and ſo it muſt come *home* and *cloſe* to the very point in difference between the two diſputing parties. Theſe ſhort Notes duely reflected on, we advance to a nearer view of his pretended *Concluſions*.

They are introduc't with theſe three dry words [*It follows that*]. And here is our firſt defeat: The Conſequences are *Six*, the Principles *Thirty*; and yet no light is thought fit to be given us, *which* Concluſion follows out of *which* Principles; but we are left to grope in the dark, and gueſs at a thing, which (as ſhall be ſeen hereafter) no *Sphynx* or *Oedipus* can ever make any probable nor even poſſible conjecture of. I wonder to what end he with ſuch exact care noted all both Principles and Conſequences in due Order with numbring Figures: was it only to give us a ſleeveleſs notice that there were *juſt Thirty* Principles and *juſt Six* Concluſions? I ſee no ſuch great Myſtery or Remarkableneſs in that obſervation as ſhould deſerve ſuch a Caution or Care. He ſhould then either

ther have *omitted these*, or else, to shew them *usefull*, have afforded us a few *Figures* more, relating each Conclusion to to it's respective Premisses or Principles. But the reason of this Carriage is manifest: For, had he done this, we might have examin'd *what* coherence each Conclusion had with it's Premisses, and whether it *follow'd* from them by necessary consequence or *no:* Also, whether the Premisses were more Evident then it self was: and all those other Properties of a Conclusion lately noted; without which 'tis the height of Non-sense to call any saying a *Conclusion*. Had these considerations come to the Test, his *Consequences* had come off as ill or worse than his *Principles*. Let themselves tell us whether I wrong them or no.

It follows that

1. *There is no necessity at all or use of an Infallible Society of men, to assure men of the Truth of those things which they may be Certain of without, and cannot have any greater assurance, supposing such Infallibility to be in them.*

This Proposition is so far from being a Conclusion from any Principles, much less from his, that 'tis *self-known* to all men of common sense, and amounts indeed to a first Principle. For, an *Infallible Society of men*, so circum-

circumstanc't as he describes, is most evidently *needless*, and to no purpose; and so this Conclusion amounts in plain Terms to *this* Identical Proposition, only paraphras'd a little, *What's needless is needless*, Or, *'tis to no purpose to put that which is of no purpose when put, or of no purpose to be put*: Which are known by the Light of Nature, and so cannot admit Proof. Is not this a rare man, who first lays such obscure *Principles* as need *Proof*, and so ought to be call'd *Conclusions*; and then pretends to infer such Conclusions as *cannot* possibly *need proving*, being *self-evident*, and so ought rather to be call'd *First Principles*? What I desire at present is that he would please to acquaint us out of *which* of his o Principles it follows, that *what needs not, needs not*. If out of none, this is *no Conclusion*, though it be a most Evident *Truth*.

2. *The Infallibility of that Society of men who call themselves the Catholick Church must be examin'd by the same Faculties in man, the same Rules of triall, the same motives, by which the Infallibility of any divine Revelation is.*

This is of the same nature with the foregoing. For, the former part, which says that *this Infallibility must be examin'd by*

the

the same Faculties in man, is as plain as 'tis that *nothing can be examin'd without a Faculty* or *Power to examin*; or, that *nothing can examin but what can examin*, which is Evident beyond all possibility of Proof: Or, was ever any man in this world so silly as to imagin that, whereas we must use our *Reasoning Faculty* in judging the Infallibility of any Divine Revelation, yet perhaps we are to make use not of the *same* Faculty, but of our *Loco-motive*, *expulsive* or *Retentive* Faculty, in examining the Infallibility of the Church?

As for the rest of it; if he means, by *Rules of Trial* and *Motives*, the maxims and Reasons we have for holding the *Truth* of any thing (as he can mean no other) then 'tis manifest that, taking Divine Revelation for a *point of Faith reveal'd*, 'tis Infallibility is to be examin'd by the *same* means *other* Points of Faith are, and so 'tis to be concluded Infallibly True, as other points of Faith also are, because the Divine Authority is shown to be engag'd for the Truth of it. Again, taking those words to signify the Act or way of Revealing, which goes *before* Faith, and so is the Object of meer natural Reason, 'tis evident its Infallibility is to be examin'd by the *same* Maxims as the Infallibility of *other* Human Authorities also are, or rather, thus taken,

the

the Infallibility of the Church testifying deliver'd Faith, and the Infallibility of the Divine Revelation are one and the same thing. So that, Distinguishing his words to clear his sense, his Conclusion plainly amounts to this, that [*Points of Faith are to be examin'd in the same manner as Points of Faith are to be examin'd*;] or else [That *Things of such a nature Subject to Human Reason, are to be examin'd in the same manner as things of that nature Subject to Human Reason are to be examin'd.*] Or rather, which will fit both of them, that [*Things of any nature are to be examin'd as things of that nature are to be examin'd.*] which is so evident to all men of common sense that it cannot need Proof, and can scarce admit any; I am sure is never prov'd by *him*: That is, 'tis *no Conclusion* drawn from any of his Principles, but putting in stead of [*the same Rules of tryal and Motives*] these words [*the same way*] which includes them both equivalently, 'tis only a Repetition of his 5*th* and 6*th* Principle, and continues the same affected ambiguity in the word *Revelation* as he us'd formerly; nay and is the same nonsense too, in case he takes *Revelation* in either place for a *point of Faith* reveal'd, and the Infallibility of the Church for that only which is built on Natural Assistance, that

is, for it's *Human Testimony*: for so 'tis most manifest the same motives neither *are* nor *can be* common to both. For *Points of Faith* are receiv'd upon *Authority* as their proper Motive, and are Relative to *That*; and the Human Authority of the Church depends on Maxims of meer *natural Reason*, and *not at all* on Authority: which evidence they depend upon *different motives*, and so must be examin'd by *motives* which are *not the same*.

This pretended Conclusion then is no *new* Proposition from his Premisses, as a Conclusion ought to be, but the *self same* with them; and is either *self-evident*, or else a meer peece of *Folly* and Nonsense, that is (the Terms of it being clear'd) both False and *unprov'd*, and so again no Conclusion, which must be *made evident* or *Prov'd*.

3. *The less convincing the Miracles, the more doubtfull the marks, the more obscure the sense of either what is call'd the Catholick Church, or declar'd by it; the less reason hath any Christian to believe upon the account of any who call themselves by the name of the Catholick Church.*

No man in his wits could any more doubt of this then of what's most Evident by the Light

Light of Nature; for, *Convincingneſs of Miracles, Evidence of the Marks*, and *Senſe of the Church*, being evidently *Means* or *Reaſons* to believe, this Concluſion, putting *leſs* of these *Reaſons*, amounts in plain Terms to this Indentical Propoſition [*Where there is leſs reaſon to believe, there is leſs reaſon to believe*] which if Dr. *St.* can ſhow poſſible to *follow* out of any of his Principles as Premiſſes, as he here pretends, he will do more then Miracle. For he hath not there prov'd in the leaſt that our *Miracles are leſs convincing, our Marks doubtful, our ſenſe obſcure*; nor ſo much as *mention'd* thoſe points, much leſſe gone about to *confute* our pretence of their Convincingneſſe and Evidence: and, without doing this, to pretend this is a Concluſion, and that it *follows* from his Principles, whereas it is incomparably more evident then the beſt of thoſe he makes uſe of, is to abuſe the common regard due to his Readers, and to declare he makes account they never knew what belong'd to ordinary Natural Logick, or the Common Light of Reaſon.

4. *The more abſurd any Opinions are and repugnant to the firſt Principles of Senſe and Reaſon which any Church obtrudes upon the Faith of men, the greater reaſon men ſhall have to reject the pretence of Infallibility in that Church as a grand Impoſture.*

This is just such another as the former; For it being self-evident that Absurdities and Contradictions are *not* to be *held*; and self-evident likewise that that which recommends such things to our belief ought *to be rejected*; this pretended Conclusion amounts to this plain Truth that [*What has more reason to be rejected, has greater* (or *more*) *reason to be rejected:*] which is an Identical Proposition, so plain that it cannot *need* or *admit* Proof; and, if it *did*, or *could*, there is not the least semblance of any thing offer'd in his Principles to prove it by, nor any sentence or clause in them concerning that matter, which has the tenth part of the clear Evidence that shines in this Proposition which he pretends *follows* from them, as a *Conclusion*.

5. *To disown what is so taught by such a Church, is not to question the veracity of God, but so firmly to adhere to that, in what he hath revealed in Scriptures, that men dare not out of love to their souls reject what is so taught.*

The first part of this, is of the same nature with the former: For the words [*such a Church*] and [*so taught*] meaning *absurdly* and *repugnantly to First Principles*, the Truth of it is full as self-evident to all Christians who hold God the Authour of Truth, as 'tis that [*The Authour of Truth is not the Authour of Lies.*] The rest of it, which would seem to put the opposite to the foregoing part,

part, and tels us that *to disown what is so taught by such a Church is firmly to adhere to what's revealed in Scripture*, &c. is absolutely False; for *to disown what is so taught by such a Church*, amounts to no more but to hold to the First Principles of Sense and Reason in points contrary to those Principles, obtruded by that Church; which a man may do and yet be an Athiest, for any thing Dr. *St.* has brought to make him adhere to Scripture: for I much doubt that a profest *Fallible Certainty*, for such wonderful & extraordinary Points as he will be bound to believe if he becomes a Christian, will scarce be able to give him *full* satisfaction of their *Truth*, if he guide himself by the First Principles of Reason, as Dr. *St.* pretends he should. Nor is it in Dr. *St's love of his Soul*, as he like a Saint pretends here, but Humour and Interest, to adhere so firmly to his private Interpretation of Scripture for his *Rule of Faith*; which he cannot but see has not in it the nature of *such* a *Rule*, nor consequently was ever intended by God for *such* an *end*: since, renouncing *Infallibility in men*, he must confess that all possible means being used to finde out Truth by Interpretations of Scripture no better grounded, it still leaves all the Reliers on it in a possibility of being mistaken (as himself also confesses Princ. 30.) that is, Insecure

cure that their Faith is True, or only Fallibly Certain of their Faith.

Before I proceed to his sixth and last Conclusion, it were not amiss to examine *those* according to the *Notes* put down *formerly* containing some Qualifications necessarily belonging to all *Conclusions*; and to show by their want of *all* those how utterly unlike these five last are to what they pretended to be. And first, *not one* of them *follows* out of his Principles as from their *Premisses*, as I show'd in each of them. 2. Their Verity is *known* and evident to all Mankind *independently* on those Principles of his. 3. Their Verity is *more* known than is that of those Principles. For, speaking of the main import and weight of them (abstracting from some particular words and phrasing his notions) they are all in a manner *self-evident* and Unexceptionable; whereas his thirty Principles are liable to multitudes of exceptions, as hath been shown in the proper Answers to each. *4ly* and *5ly* The Consequence, Connexion or Following of these pretended Conclusions out of their Premisses is not so much as attempted to be shown, nor any *one* of them *related* to any Principle or Principles; but all the *Figures* which distinguish both the one and the others stand for *Cyphers* and are useless. Lastly, were all these Conclusions granted him, yet still he is never the

nearer

nearer having prov'd or compas't what he intended. For, suppose we granted that there can be no necessity of an Infallible Society of men to do that which can be done as well without them? What if the supernatural Infallibility of the Church must be examin'd by the same Faculty and the same ways Points of Faith are, or it's Natural Infallibility the same way it's Natural or Human Authority is examin'd? What if we have less Reason to believe it, if it's Miracles be less convincing, it's Marks more doubtfull, and it's sence more Obscure; and greater reason to reject it, the more absurd it's opinions are, and repugnant to the first Principles of Sense and Reason? What if to disown such Doctrines be not to question God's Veracity? What, I say, if all these were granted by us (as they would have been very readily at the first, though he had never skirmish't and flourish't and kept this pother with laying so formally *six Principles agreed on by both sides*, and then thirty other of his own?) yet, he is not one jot the nearer *the reducing the Faith of Protestants to Principles* which was *promis't* us at the beginning, and so we ought to expect the *performance* of it when he had deduc't his Conclusions, which use to infer the Intent propos'd to himself by the disputant, and so come home to the very point the Argu-

would

would be at. Indeed, if he could ſhow us ſolidly that Infallibility in a Church were uſeleſs; that, examin'd by ſuch ways and means as it *ought*, it would be overthrown and could not ſtand the trial; that it's Miracles were Unconvincing; it's Marks Doubtfull, it's Senſe *declar'd* by it Obſcure, or that it's Opinions were indeed Abſurd and Repugnant to the Firſt Principles of Senſe and Reaſon: very great matters had indeed in that caſe been done againſt our Church and Faith, yet ſtill nothing at all to the eſtabliſhment of his own. A Catholick might in that caſe have indeed *loſt* his *own* Faith, and be to ſeek for *another*, but never find any meerly by means of theſe deſtructive Poſitions alone; unleſs Dr. *St.* can ſettle him ſome *other* Ground built on *better* Principles and ſuch as are competent to ſettle Faith on, which *Fallible Certainty* (were it ſenſe) will never reach. So that were all his Concluſions hitherto freely granted, he is ſtill as far from having attain'd what he propos'd to himſelf and promis't others, as at the beginning. Nor can it be imagined why he makes us this mock-ſhew of Conſequences, but only, that as at the beginning he put down moſt undeniable and moſt ſacred *Principles agreed on both ſides*, ſo to make his Readers apprehend before-hand he muſt needs conquer who had ſuch ſure Cards

to

to play (though by his ſhyneſſe to make uſe of them and apply them home it appear'd he had no Title to them.) ſo now he puts five *undeniable* Propoſitions for Concluſions to make weak nnattentive Readers imagine he had actually conquer'd, for nothing founds a more *compleat* Victory, then to inferr *evident* Concluſions; But the ill luck is, not one of them is a Concluſion, nor has *that kind* of Evidence in it which is peculiar to *ſuch* Propoſitions, *viz.* Evidence had by means of *Proof*, but they are all evident of *themſelves* or ſelf-evident, and ſo a good plot is unluckily ſpoil'd.

I have yet one thing more to ſay to them, that they have all of them evidently the Nature of *Premiſſes* in them, and would do extraordinary ſervice to his Cauſe taken in *that* capacity (as far, I mean, as he ayms to overthrow the Catholick Church) if the badneſs of it would let him purſue them and ſtand by them and apply them. To ſhow which I will put them down in a clear method, that it may be ſeen where the point ſticks. The Firſt Concluſion then has in it the Nature of a Major Propoſition; and put in a Diſcourſe, ſtands thus.

"*That Infallibility without which men*
"*may be Certain of Faith, and cannot have*
"*greater Aſſurance of Faith were it put, is*
"*not neceſſary to be put.*

" But such is the Infallibility of the Church " of Rome.

" Therefore the Infallibility of the Church " of Rome is not to be put.

The second stands thus,(if it can at all concern the purpose.)

That Infallibility which is to be examin'd by the same Faculties, Rules of Trial and Motives by which the Infallibility of any Divine Revelation is, cannot bear the test, but must be overthrown.

But the Infallibility of the Roman Catholick Church is to be thus examin'd.

Therefore it cannot stand the test, but must be overthrown.

The Third stands thus.

That Church whose Miracles are less convincing, mark more doubtfull, sense more obscure, has less reason to be believ'd.

But such is the Church of Rome.

Therefore she has less reason to be believ'd.

The Fourth thus.

The Infallibility of that Church whose Opinions are absurd and repugnant to the First Principles of sense and reason has great reason to be rejected as a Grand Imposture.

But the Infallibility of the Church of Rome is the Infallibility of such a Church whose Opinions

opinions are absurd and repugnant to the First Principles of Sense and Reason.

Therefore it's Infallibility ought to be rejected as a Grand Imposture.

The Fifth thus,

They who disown Doctrins thus absurd and repugnant to the First Principles of Sense and Reason do own and not question therein the veracity of God.

But we (in disowning the Roman Church) *disown such doctrins; Therefore, We in so doing own, or do not question the Veracity of God.*

By which discourses 'tis evidently seen that the natural posture and place for these five Propositions, in an attempt to overthrow the Roman Churches Infallibility, and to excuse the Protestants for not obeying her, as is here intended, (for they are nothing at all to the *reducing the Faith of Protestants to Principles*, which they were pretendedly brought for) is to make them the *Major* Propositions, where the Chief Principles to all Conclusions *use* and *ought* to be placed. 'Tis evident also that *these* Premisses or Principles stand firm in their own undeniable Verity; and the *only* Thing for him to do is to make good all the *Minor* Propositions; which done, all the Con-

cluſions muſt neceſſarily follow, and ſo his work is *done*; as indeed it always ought to be when the *Concluſion* is *inferr'd*. Whereas, making theſe Major Propoſitions the *Concluſions*, 'tis manifeſt he is to *begin again* and *argue* from them, when he had *concluded*, and ſo was at an *end* of his diſcourſe. So that 'tis moſt palpably Evident, that Dr. *St.* moſt abſurdly, unskilfully and preposterously made thoſe his *Principles* which were *obſcure* and *ungranted* and had hundreds of *Exceptions* againſt them, and ſo *needed proof*, that is, made thoſe his *Principles* which ought to have been his *Concluſions*; and put thoſe for his Concluſions which were in a manner *ſelf-evident* and muſt be granted by all Mankind, and which naturally ought to be the *Majors* in any diſcourſe on this Subject; that is, he miſtook *Principles* for *Concluſions* and *Concluſions* for *Principles*; which perhaps was the reaſon he made uſe of thoſe words [*reduc't to Principles*] in ſtead of *deduc't from Principles*; intimating thereby, that his *Concluſions* were all of them indeed *Principles*. Did ever Logick and Common Senſe go thus to wrack?

His 6th Concluſion remains yet to be ſpoke to, and 'tis this.

6. *Though nothing were to be believed as the Will of God, but what is by the Catholick*

Church declareed to be ſo, yet this doth not at all concern the Church of Rome, *which neither is the Catholick Church, nor any ſound part, or member of it.*

This is far from being *ſelf-evident* as were the *former*, but of it ſelf as *obſcure* as may be, and in that regard is *capable* of being a *Concluſion*, had there been any *Premiſſes* to *inferr* it. It comes *home* alſo to the *point* as far as his Intent was to impugn Catholicks; for were that which it contains *concluded*, it would import no leſs than the utter overthrow of the Roman Cauſe. But, where are the *Premiſſes* or Principles which are to infer it? Muſt every bold and unprov'd ſaying, and which begs the whole Queſtion, be cal'd a *Concluſion* whether it have any *Principles* or no to prove it by? If then it have none, why does he put it for a Concluſion, and ſo pretend he has concluded it? If any, why does he not *ſhow* us them, and *relate* to them? Is there any thing more important then to be acquainted with thoſe perillous all-overturning Principles on which a Concluſion ſo deſperately deſtructive to *Rome* is grounded? Or, may we not juſtly ſuſpect that not giving us notice with *which* of his Inſignificant thirty Principles this Romantical ſixth Concluſion had any Commerce, he was conſcious to himſelf it follow'd from *none* of them; and yet notwithſtanding having a

mighty

mighty mind to be thought to have *concluded* it, he therefore very politickly call'd his own saying a *Conclusion*. I know he has pretended elsewhere Idolatrous worship (forsooth) has *corrupted* her and made her unsound, and twenty other Flaws he finds in her; But then he ought to have made this Proposition be related to those Discourses, and not pretend they *follow* out of his thirty Principles where not a word to that purpose is found.

Moreover, these Churches *now* in Communion with *Rome* were *once true* Churches; *how* came they then, or *when*, to be *now* so *rotten* and *unsound*: Let the time be assign'd when by *altering* their *Faith* and *worship* they became *corrupt*: Let the persons, place, manners of beginning, proceeding and other circumstances be particulariz'd, that so a matter of Fact of this manifest and concerning nature may be made credible: Above all, how it happen'd that matters of this notorious and important nature should remain *unrecorded*, and still believ'd that no such change was, and this upon the score of a testifying Authority, *so great*, that it must be confest even by our enemies, that it was never heard since the Foundation of the world, that so many vast Nations should swallow so prodigious an *Errour* so tamely in a most *manifest* and most *concerning* matter of Fact, and

which

which, if it be indeed an Error, none can be absolutely secure of the Existence of any former Kings or Actions done before our times, much less of the Authority or Text of any Book in the world. But, I suppose, if these things be prest, the best answer will be some Text of Scripture, as that *the Enemy sowed Tares while men slept*; which, interpreted by Dr. *St's* private spirit, shall sanctifie to us this prodigious piece of nonsense, that the Roman-Catholick Church alter'd her Faith and Christian practise, and yet *none observ'd* it or took notice of it; that is, that those many *Millions* of her Subjects begun (as they must at one time or other if she indeed alter'd her Faith) to believe and practice otherwise then they did, yet *none* of them knew they *did so*: All *slept*, and were wrap't up (God wot) in the dark night of Ignorance, till owl-ey'd *Luther* even at that mid-night of Infidelity most blessedly espy'd the Light of the Gospel dawning, and show'd it to Dr. *St's* Predecessors.

Now, whoever reflects how considerable a Part of Christianity those Churches in Communion with *Rome* make, and how many abominable *Corruptions* or *Sickesses* there are in her, if those of Dr. *St's* Private-spirited Church may be trusted, will with good reason conclude that the Church has as many diseases in her as an old horse, and very

very few limbs of her *free*; ſo that it will appear ſhe for whoſe *ſake whole* nature was made, is the greateſt Monſter for wretchedneſs, and that her condition is more miſerable then any other thing in nature: and conſequently, that God's Providence has a ſtenderer care of his *Church* then of the moſt *trifling toy* in the world; which ill ſuites with the great wonders and extraordinary things he has done for her; as being made man, dying for her, and ſuch like.

It were good too to know *how long* a member of the Church may remain *unſound* ere it be time to *cut it off*; alſo, whether it *can* be cut off, or *who* are likely to cut it off: without which the Churches caſe muſt needs be moſt deſperate, to be almoſt from top to toe as full of diſeaſes as ſhe can well hold, and no means extant to give her help. But alas, 'tis ſo evident that there are *none* in the world but *her ſelf* and ſome *few* Sects that have manifeſtly *gone out* from her, and it ſounds ſo unnaturally, to ſay the *Tree* can be cut off from it's *branches*, that whatever ſuch Talkers may ſay in common, yet come once to put it in execution the Abſurdity of the Practice of it bewrays the Falſhood of Tenet.

But to come cloſer to this voluntary ſaying of his; Either the Church of *Rome* relies for the *Certainty* of her Faith, on the

right

right Rule of Faith appointed by God, or she does *not*: If *not*, she has no *Faith* at all, but only *Opinion* (however she may hap to be in the right in many Points she holds) for her Assent will want the Certainty requisite to *Faith*, as not being built on the stable Grounds God had laid to give it that Certainty; and, if the Church of *Rome* have no *Faith* 'tis impossible she should be a *Church*, or any *part* of a Church, sound or unsound, as wanting what's most Essential, *True Faith*; and so Dr. *St.* has provided rarely well for the Mission of his own Church; for, if ours were *no* Church, she had no Church-Authority; and if she *had none* her self, 'tis evident she could *give none*: whence will follow that the Reformed Churches deriv'd nothing which was Constitutive of a Church from any foregoing one, but were wholly erected anew; and then I would know *what* Authority, under that of *Jesus Christ* who constituted the Church *at first*, had power to constitute it *anew*. But if Dr. *St.* says, that the Church of *Rome* rely'd on the Means left by God to *ascertain* Faith, then 'tis manifest that *doing so* she *could not erre* in Faith, and so is as *sound* as may be, whatever our *Talking* Disputant says. Since then there is no middle between [*relying on the Means left by God to ascertain Faith*] and [*not relying on it*] and so that Body in Communion with

the Roman Church must necessarily do one of them; and if she *does* rely on it she must needs have *all true Faith*, and so be very *healthful* or *sound*; if she does *not*, she must needs have *no* True *Faith* at all, and so not only lose her *Health* but her *Essence* too, which by consequence un-churches the Reformers also, it were good Dr. *S.* would consider the point over again, and not *talk* thus any thing at random without *proof*.

As for his *saying* (for *saying* things craftily, and prettily is his only Talent) that the Church of *Rome*, by which I presume he means, as we do, those Churches in Communion with the Roman, *is not the Catholick Church*, this will be best decided by settling the *Certain* Rule of Faith, and then, by applying of it, to consider whether *any* body *out of* her Communion have not *deserted* that Rule; which if they *have*, they will be prov'd thence to have *no Faith*, nor consequently to have in them the *Essence* of a *Church*; and so if this defect appear in them *all*, they can be in true speech *no parts* of the Church; in which case it must necessarily follow that those in Communion with the *Roman* are the *Catholick* Church. Let us begin with *Grounds* and pursue them by *close* discoursing and things will easily be *decided*; but this Talking Voluntarie, this counterfeiting and pretending to Principles and Conclusions whom

there

there is in reality neither the *one* nor the *other*, is good for nothing but empty ſhow.

Theſe excellent performances having emboldened this *man of Confidence* to conceit he has done *wonders*, he founds the Triumph of his own Victory in theſe words.

This may ſuffice to ſhew the validity of the Principles on which the Faith of Proteſtants ſtands, and the weakneſs of thoſe of the Church of Rome.

Theſe words give us occaſion to reflect back on his *Promiſe* and his *Performances*: His *Promiſe* was to *reduce the Faith of Proteſtants to Principles*; What he has performed is this. He has not yet laid one Propoſition which is to him a *Principle*; (that is, which he *makes uſe of* to conclude what he deſigns) but what is both *Obſcure* and *Falſe*; He has ſettled *no Faith* at all but brought *all* into *Opinion*, by diſcarding *Infallible*, and maintaining only *Fallible Certainty*. And had he indeed ſettled any *Faith*, yet he has not produc't *own word* to ſettle the Faith of *Proteſtants* in particular, but all will equally fit a *Socinian* or a *Quaker*; and his way of managing his Rule will much better ſuite with a *Quaker* or any *Fanatick* than with a *Proteſtant*. Alſo, in ſtead of *laying its Principles*, he at firſt begins

to *deduce from Principles*, and in the process of his discourse he puts *Conclusions* for *Principles*, and *Principles* for Conclusions; and so *reduces* and *deduces*, that is draws *backwards and forwards*, *blows* and *sups* both at once.

In a word, the Total sum of his Heroick Atchievments amounts to this. He has layd thirty *Principles*, which wanting either *evidence* or else necessary Influence upon what he pretends to prove, are *no Principles*: He hath so *reduc't* to those Principles that he makes six Conclusions *follow*, that is, he *deduces* from them; and, so, he has so *reduc't* to principles, that he has *not reduc't* to them. He has put that for a *Rule*, which wanting power to direct aright those who are to rely on it, is evident *no Rule*; He has attributed such a *Certainty* to his *Faith*, as is a *Fallible* one, that is *no Certainty* but a *Chimæra*: and consequently he has so Principl'd *Faith* as makes it *no Faith*, but *Opinion* only. He has made six Propositions so *follow* out the thirty, which for want of necessary coherence with them do *not follow*; Lastly, he has made those to be *Conclusions* which for want of *Premisses*, and by reason of their *greater Evidence* than is found in his *Principles*, and for many other regards, are *not Conclusions* but rather *Principles*. All which is shown in their proper places. So that,

that, his perplexing Intricacy in contriving and posturing his words oddly, being once unravell'd, their affected ambiguity clear'd, and his Insignificances and Incoherences layd open, the Common Light of nature will inform any Attentive and Intelligent Reader that Dr. *S.* has *not reduc'd the Faith of Protestants to Principles*, but that his whole discourse attempting it *is reduc'd to Contradictions*. Yet in confidence of his vast performances he ventures upon this grand Conclusion that shall strike all dead.

From all which it follows that it can be nothing but wilfull Ignorance, weakness of Judgement, strength of prejudice, or some sinful passion, which makes any one forsake the Communion of the Church of England, *to embrace that of the Church of Rome.*

But with how much greater reason may I conclude, that (in case the *Church of England* owns *his* way of discoursing *here*, and holds not that the Tradition, Practice and Sense of Gods Church is to give us that assurance of the meaning of Scripture as to build Faith on it, but that 'tis to be left to every *private* mans *Fancy* to be his *own Judge* in that affair) nothing but either an *Invincibly-weak Ignorance*, or the wicked Sin of *Spiritual Pride*, making

making private men scorn to submit their Judgments to persons wiser than themselves, or to be taught by their lawful Pastors whom God has appointed for that end, can make any man remain in the Communion of the Church of *England*, and not unite himself to the Communion of the Church of Rome. Especially, since they all hold that *Faith cannot possibly be False*, & so must hold that the *means to Faith cannot possibly lead the relier's on it into error*, and yet (if but meanly versit in the world) they must needs experience that those who *do* rely on their *own sense of Scripture* differ in most Fundamental points of Christianity, and so, one side necessarily *errs* in so doing.

FINIS.

TRANSITION TO THE Following Discourse.

Having thus totally defeated Dr. St's. *Attempt to* reduce his Faith to Principles, *and shown that in stead of performing this, all the most substantiall parts of his Discourse are* reduc't *to so many* Contradictious, *it may perhaps be expected I should assert the Truth of my* own *by showing that 'tis built on such Firm and Evident Grounds. But I presume I have already perform'd this in my* Sure-footing *and its* Corollaries, *as also in* Faith Vindicated *and its* Inferences; *and, if it shall appear needfull or be requir'd of me by Learned Men, it may perhaps hereafter be brought into a closer and more rigorous Form. Yet, that it may be seen how easily our Discourses concerning the Certainty and Ground of Faith are resolvable into* Evident Principles, *I shall annex for an Instance a small Peece of mine; which, though it was never pretended to be a severe Proceß by way of* Principles, *but only*

only meant for a connected Discourse, *yet I doubt not but I shall shew that each Argument of it where it speaks assertively, has a firm and* Evident *Principle at the Bottom, giving it* Stability *and Evidence, and through vertue of these Qualifications, rendering it Solidly and Absolutely Convictive.*

THE

THE METHOD To Arrive at SATISFACTION IN RELIGION.

1. Since all *Superstructures* must needs be weak whose *foundation* is not surely laid; He who desires to be satisfy'd in Religion, ought to begin with searching out, and establishing the *Ground* on which Religion is *built*; that is, the *First Principle* into which the several Points of *Faith* are *resolv'd*, and on which their *Certainty*, as to us, depends.

2. To do this, 'tis to be consider'd, that *a Church* is a *Congregation of Faithful*, and *Faithful* are those who have *true Faith*; Wherefore, till it be known which is the *true Faith*, it cannot be known which is the *true Church*. Again, *A Council* is a *Repre-*

ſentative, A *Father*, an *Eminent Member of the Church, and a Witneſs of her Doctrin*; Wherefore, till it be known which is the *true Church*, it cannot be known which is a *Council*, or who a *Father*. Laſtly, Since we cannot know which is *Scripture*, but by the Teſtimony of thoſe who recommend it; And of *Hereticks* we can have no ſecurity that they have not corrupted it in favour of their falſe Tenets; neither can we be ſecure which is *Scripture*, till *we* be ſatisfy'd who are the *truly Faithful*, on whoſe Teſtimony we may ſafely rely in this affair.

3. Wherefore, he who ſincerely aims at *Satisfaction in Religion* ought firſt of all to find out and eſtabliſh ſome *aſſured Means* or *Rule* by which he may be ſecured which is *true Faith*; For till this be done, He cannot be ſecure either of *Scripture*, *Church*, *Council*, or *Father*, but having once done this, is in a ready way to Judge certainly of all; Whereas if he begin with any of the other, or indeed argue from them at all, till the *Rule of Faith* be firſt ſettled, he takes a wrong Method, and breaks the Laws of diſcourſe, by beginning with what is *leſs certain*, and indeed to him as yet *uncertain*; and in effect, puts the *Concluſion* before the *Premiſſes*; unleſs he argue, *Ad Hominem*, or againſt the perſonal Tenets of his Adverſary, which is a good way to *Confute*, but not to *Satisfie*.

4. And

4. And, becauſe the *Rule of Faith* muſt be known before *Faith* can be known, and *Faith* before *Scripture*, *Church*, *Councils* and *Fathers*; it appears, that to the finding out this *Rule* no aſſiſtance of *Books* will be requiſite, for every one who needs *Faith*, is not capable to reade and underſtand *Books*: There is left then only *Reaſon* to uſe in this Inquiry; And, ſince People of *all Capacities* are to be ſaved, much *ſharpneſs* and *depth* of *wit* will not be requiſite, but *plain Natural Reaſon* rightly directed will ſuffice.

5. This being ſo, the *Method* of ſeeking *ſatisfaction in Religion*, is become ſtrangely both more *ſhort* and *eaſie*. For, here will need no tedious turning over *Libraries*, nor learning *Languages*, nor endleſs *comparing* voluminous *Quotations*, nor ſo much as the skill to read *Engliſh*, all being reduc'd to the conſidering *one ſingle Point* (but ſuch an one as bears all along with it) and this too comprehenſible, (as will appear) to a *mean* underſtanding. Again, the large debating *particular* Points in a controverſiall way is by this means avoided. For, when the *Right Rule of Faith* is *certainly* known, then as certainly as there is *any faith* in the world, all that is received on *that Rule* is *certain*, and of *faith*. Not but that 'tis of excellent uſe too, to cheriſh and ſtrengthen the *faith*, eſpecially of *Young Believers*,

by ſhewing *each particular Point* agreeable to *right Reaſon* and *Chriſtian Principles*, and recorded expreſly in, or deduced by conſequence from the *Divinely-inſpired Books*.

6. Laſtly, *This Method* is particularly ſuitable to the Nature of *ſincere Inquirers*; who, if they want the *liberty* of their own Native *Indifferency*, and be aw'd by any *Authority* whatever before that *Authority* be made out, cannot but remain unſatisfy'd, and inwardly feel they proceed not according to *Nature* and the conduct of *unbyaſſt Reaſon*; Whereas, when the Authority is once made *evident*, Reaſon will *clearly* inform them that it becomes their Nature to aſſent to it.

7. But how will it appear that 'tis ſo *eaſily* determinable by *common Reaſon*, which is the *right Rule of Faith*? Very evidently. But firſt we muſt obſerve, the Aſſent called *Faith*, depends upon two Propoſitions, [*What God hath ſaid is true*] and [*God hath ſaid this*] out of which two neceſſarily follows the *Concluſion*, that *this* or *that* in particular is true. Of theſe two we are concerned only in the later: For to examin *Why God is to be believed* when he has ſaid any thing, which they call the *formal Motive of faith*, is not a Task for thoſe who own *Chriſtianity*. But all we have to do is to finde out *What God hath ſaid*, or (which in our caſe is all one)

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What Chriſt has taught; and that, whatever it be which acqnaints us with this, we call *THE RULE OF FAITH*; as that, which *Regulates* our belief concerning *Chriſts Doctrine*, or the *Prineiples of Religion*. Now I affirm ir may by *obvious Reaſon* be diſcover'd which this *Rule* is; and that by looking into the *Nature* of it, or conſidering *what kinde* of thing it ought to be; which is no more than attentively to reflect what is meant by thoſe two *ordinary* words, RULE & FAITH.

8. And both of them acquaint us that the *Rule of Faith* muſt be the means to *aſſure us infallibly* what Chriſt taught. For, in caſe a *Rule*, though we *apply* it to our power, and *ſwerve* not from it, leave us ſtill *deceivable* in thoſe points in which it ſhould regulate us; we need *another Rule* to ſecure us that we be not *actually* deceiv'd, and ſo this *other* and not the *former* is our *Rule*. Next, *Faith* (ſpeaking of *Chriſtian* Faith) differs from *Opinion* in this, that *Opinion* may be *falſe*; but *Faith* cannot: Wherefore *the Rule of faith*, both as 'tis a *Rule*, and as it grounds *Faith*, doubly involves *Infallibility* in its Notion.

9. Let us apply this to *Scripture* and *Tradition*, (for ſetting aſide the *Light of the private Spirit* grounding *Phanaticiſm*, there are no more which claim to be *Rules of faith*) & ſee to *which* of them this Notion *fits*; that

is,

is, whic hath trnly *the Nature of the Rule of faith*. And this is perform'd by examining *which* of them *is of its own Nature, if apply'd and held to, able to assure us infallibly, that Christ taught thus and thus.*

10. And for the *Letter of Scripture*, not to insist that, if it be *deny'd*, as *many*, if not all the parts of the *New Testament* have been by some or other; or mention that those who receive the *Books*, do often and always may doubt of almost *any* particular Text alledged, whether some fault through *Malice*, *Negligence*, or *Weakness* be not crept into it; in which Cases the *Letter* cannot evidence it *self*, but needs *another* Rule to establish it: I say, not to insist upon these things, which yet are undeniable, We see by experience *Multitudes* of Sects differing from one another, and *some* in *most fundamental Points*, as the *Trinity* and *Godhead* of *Christ*; yet all agreeing in the *outward Letter*. And it is not onely Uncharitable, but even Impossible to imagin that *none* among so *vast Multitudes* do intend to *follow the Letter to their power*, while they all profess to *reverence* it as much as any, *read* it frequently, *study* it diligently, *quote* it constantly, and zealously defend the *sense* which they conceive of it, so far that many are even ready to die for it: Wherfore it cannot be suspected but they *follow it to*

their

their power; and yet 'tis ſo far from *infallibly* teaching them the Doctrine of Chriſt, that, all this notwithſtanding, they contradict one another, and that in *moſt fundamental points*. The bare *Letter* then *is not the Rule of Faith*, as not being of its own Nature *able to aſſure us infallibly, though we follow it to our power, what Chriſt has taught*: I would not be miſtaken to have *leſs* Veneration than I ought for the *Divine Books*, whoſe *Excellence* and *Uſefulneſs* as it is beyond man to expreſs, ſo peradventure among men there are not many who conceit this deeper than my ſelf; and I am ſure not one amongſt thoſe who take the confidence to charge us with ſuch irreverent thoughts: But we are now about another *Queſtion*. They are the *Word of God*, and their *true Senſe* is *Faith*; We are enquiring out *the Rule of Faith*; whoſe office 'tis not to *ſatisfy* us that *we ought to believe what God has ſaid*, which none doubts of, but *What it is which God has ſaid*. And I affirm, *That the Letter alone is not a ſufficient means to aſſure us infallibly of this*; and the experience of ſo many erring Thouſands, is a lamentable but convincing proof of it.

11. On the other ſide, there needs but common ſenſe to diſcern, *That* TRADITION *is able, if follow'd to ones power, to bring infallibly down to after Ages, what Chriſt*

Christ and his Apostles taught at first. For, since it means no more but delivery of Faith by daily Teaching and Practise of Immediate Forefathers to their respective Children; and it is not possible that men should be *ignorant* of that to which they were *educated*, of that which they *daily saw*, and *heard* and *did*; let this Rule be *followed to ones power*, that is, let Children resolve still to believe and practise themselves what they are taught by, and practis'd with their Fathers; and this from Age to Age; and it is impossible but all succeeding Children which *follow* this Rule, must needs from the Apostles time to the end of the World, be *of the same Faith* which was taught at first: For, while they do thus, there is *no change*; and if there be *no change*, 'tis *the same*. *Tradition* then, thus understood, has in it the Nature of *the Rule of Faith*, as being *able, if held to, to bring down infallibly what Christ and his Apostles taught.*

12. We have found *the Rule of Faith*, there remains to find which body of men in the World *have ever*, and *still do follow this Rule*. For, *those*, and *onely those*, can be infallibly assured of what Christ taught, that is, can *onely* have *true Faith*. Whereas *all the rest*, since they have but *Fallible grounds*, or a Rule for their Faith which *may deceive them*, cannot have *right Faith*, but *Opinion* onely;

onely; which *may be false*, whereas Faith *cannot*.

13. And first, 'tis a strong presumption that those many particular Churches in communion with the *Roman*, which for that reason are called *Roman-Catholicks*, do hold their Doctrine by this infallible Tenure; since they alone own *Tradition* to be an *Infallible Rule*, whereas the Deserters of that Church write whole Books to disgrace and vilify it: And, since no man in his wits will go about to weaken a *Tenure* by which he holds his *Estate*, 'tis a manifest sign that *the Deserters of that Church* hold *not* their Faith by the Tenure of *Tradition*, but rather acknowledge by their carriage that *Tradition* stands *against* them; and that 'tis their *Interest* to renounce it, lest it should overthrow their Cause: Wherefore, since *Tradition* [§.11.] *is the only means to derive Christs Doctrin infallibly down to after Ages*, they, by renouncing it, renounce the only means of conveying the Doctrine of Faith certainly to us, and are *convinc'd* to have *no Faith*, but only *Opinion*. And not only so, but even to *oppose* and go point-blank *against* it, since they oppose the *only sure Method* by which it can with certainty come down to us.

14. Besides, since *Tradition* (which I always understand as formerly explicated to

be the *Teaching the Faith of immediate Fore-fathers by words and practiſe*) hath been proved the *only infallible Rule of Faith*, thoſe who in the days of K. *Henry VIII.* and ſince have deſerted it, ought to have had *infallible certainty* that *we* receded from it formerly: for, if we did *not*, but ſtill *cleav'd* to it, it could not chuſe but preſerve the *true Faith* to us; and if they *be not ſure* we did *not*, they know not but we have the *true faith*; and manifeſtly condemn themſelves in deſerting a *Faith*, which for ought they know was the *true* one: But, *Infallible Certainty* that *we* had *deſerted* this *Rule*, they can have none, ſince they neither hold the *Fathers* Infallible, nor *their own Interpretation of Scripture*; and therefore unavoidably ſhipwaack themſelves upon that deſperat Rock. Which is aggravated by this Conſideration, that they built not their *Reformation* upon a zealous care of *righting Tradition*, which we had formerly violated, nor ſo much as *Teſtimonial Evidence* (as ſhall be ſhown preſently) that we had *deſerted It*; but all their pretence was that we had deſerted *Scripture*: and, becauſe they aſſign no other *certain means* to know the ſenſe of the Holy Books but the *Words*, and thoſe are ſhown to be *no certain means* [§.10.] 'tis plain the Reformers regarded *not* at all *the right Rule of Faith*, but built their *Reformation* upon a

weak

weak Foundation, and incompetent to ſuſtain *ſuch* a building. Whence, neither had the *firſt Reformers*, nor have their *Followers*, *Faith* at all, but only *Opinion*.

15. On the contrary, ſince 'tis *known* and *agreed to* by all the World, at what time *all Deſerters* of our Church, of what name ſoeyer, broke from *us*; as alſo who were the *Authors* and *Abettors*, and who the *Impugners* of ſuch *New Doctrins*; beſides, in *what places* they firſt begun, and were thence propagated to *others*: but *no* ſuch thing is known of *us* even by our *Adverſaries*, whom it concerns to be moſt diligent Searchers after it; ſeeing they are in a hundred mindes about the Time *when*, and the Perſons *who* introduc'd theſe *pretended New Doctrins* of ours, which they ſay vary from Scripture; as may be ſeen by their own words in ſeveral Books, and amongſt others, one call'd, *The Progeny of Proteſtants*, and this for *every* point in which they pretend we have *innovated*: 'tis plain that when *we* charge *them* with *deſertting* the *known Doctrin* of the former Church, and the *Rule of Faith*, we ſpeak *open* and *acknowledg'd evidence*; when *they* accuſe *us* of the ſame, their charge is *obſcure* and *unknown* even to the *very Accuſers*; nay, plainly prov'd *falſe* by the *neceſſity* of the things being *notorious*, if it happen'd, and the *conſtant disagreement* of thoſe who al-

ledge it, *when* or *how* it happen'd.

16. I say *Notorious*; for, since *Points of Faith* which ground all *Christian practise*, are the most *concerning* Truths in the World, it cannot be but the *denyal* of *such* Truths must needs raise great commotions before the opposite Truths could be universally spread; and the change of Christian *Practise* and Manners which depend on those Truths, must be wonderfully manifest and known to every body; wherefore, had *we* been guilty of *such* a *change*, and introduc'd *New* Tenets, and propagated them over the Christian *world* as is pretended, it must needs be manifestly and universally known that we *did so*; neither is it possible the change should be so Insensible and *invisible*, that our very Adversaries cannot find it out; especially this alone making their *Victory* over us so certain and *perfect*. For, seeing we own TRADITION as an *Infallible Rule*, We are irrecoverably overthrown, if they make out that *we* ever deserted It: and, surely, nothing should be more easie than to make out That, than which, if True, nothing can possibly be more Notorious.

17. Moreover, since it cannot be, that *Multitudes* of men should profess to *hold* points both infinitely concerning and strangely difficult to believe, and yet own *no ground* upon which they *hold them*: if *we* ever, as 'tis

said

ſaid *we have*, deſerted Tradition, we muſt, till the time we took it up again, have proceeded upon ſome *other* Ground or *Rule of Faith*: And, becauſe none ever charged us with proceeding upon the *Letter of Scripture* or *Phanaticiſm*, and beſides *theſe* there is *no other* but *Tradition*, 'tis plain *we never* deſerted, but *always* ſtuck to *Tradition*.

18. Beſides, 'tis impoſsible that that Body of Men which claim for their Rule of Faith, an *uninterrupted Tradition* from the Apoſtles days, ſhould not have held to that Rule of Faith *from the beginning*: For, otherwiſe they muſt have *taken it up* at ſome time or other, and by doing ſo, profeſs to the World, that *Nothing* is to be held of Faith, but what *deſcended* by an uninterrupted delivery from the beginning; and yet at the ſame time acknowledge that *all* they then held was *not ſo deſcended*, but received by *another Rule*, this of *Tradition* or uninterrupted Delivery being then *newly taken up*; which is ſo palpable a Contradiction, that, as Humane Nature could not fall into it: ſo, if it could, the very pretence would have overthrown it ſelf, and needed no other confutation.

19. Add to this, that none of thoſe many Sects who from time to time have deſerted our Church's Faith and Diſcipline, and ſo become her Adverſaries, ever yet pretended to aſsign the time *when* we took up this Rule

of

of *Tradition*; and yet a change in that on which we profeſs to build *all the reſt*, muſt needs be of all changes the moſt *viſible*, and moſt apt to juſtifie the carriage of thoſe Revolters. Wherefore, 'tis *demonſtrably evident* on all ſides, that, as this preſent Body of men, call'd the *Roman-Catholick Church*, does *now hold* to Tradition, ſo their Predeceſſors uninterruptedly from the Apoſtles days *did the ſame*; that is, did hold to it *ever*. And, ſince 'tis ſhown before [§. 11.] that this Rule, *if held to*, will certainly convey down *the true Faith* unchang'd *to all* after Ages, 'tis likewiſe demonſtrable, that *they* have *the true Faith*, and are *the truly Faithful*, or *true Church*.

20. And hence by the way, is clearly ſeen what is meant by *UNIVERSAL TRADITION*, and where 'tis to be look'd for and found; which puzzles many men otherwiſe very judicious and ſincere; who profeſs a readineſs, nay, a duty to follow *Univerſal Tradition*, but they are at a loſs, *how* we may certainly know *which* is *It*. For, ſince 'tis evident that to compleat the notion of the *Univerſality of Mankind*, (for example) it were abſurd to think we muſt take in *brutes* too, which are of an *oppoſite* nature to Mankind, but 'tis *ſufficient* to include *all in whom* the *nature* of *Mankind* is found; ſo, to make up the notion of *Univerſal*

verſal Tradition, it were equally abſurd to think we ought to take in thoſe in *whom* the nature of *Tradition* is not found, but its *Oppoſit*, that is, *Deſerters of Tradition* or their *Followers*; but 'tis *ſufficient* to include *thoſe* in *whom* Tradition *is found* as in its Subject, that is, *Adherers to Tradition*, or *Traditionary Chriſtians*. All, therefore, that have at any time *deſerted* the *Teaching* and *Practiſe* of the *immediately* fore-going Church, how numerous and of what name ſoever they behave no ſhow of Title to be *parts of Univerſal Tradition*,; and only they who themſelves *do*, and whoſe Anceſtors *did* ever *adhere* to it, how *few* ſoever they ſeem, are the *only* perſons who can with any ſenſe pretend to be thoſe, of whom, as Parts, *Univerſal Tradition* conſiſts. Whence alſo that Rule of *Vincentius Lirinenſis*, directing us to hold that which is believ'd *in all places, all times, and by all*, which is ſo miſ-apprehended by our Modern Diſſenters, is clearly underſtood; *viz.* by taking it with Reſtriction to all thoſe who hold to Tradition. For, otherwiſe, ſhould we not *reſtrain* it to thoſe only who have *adher'd* to the *Rule of Faith*, but *enlarge* it to the utmoſt extent of the words, ſo as to comprehend alſo thoſe who have *deſerted* that *Rule*, nothing could poſsibly be held *of Faith* which any *Hiretick* had ever *deny'd*: and ſo, inſtead of being a Rule to

diſtinguiſh

distinguish or *know* what we are to believe, it would by thus *confounding* right Faith with all the Hereſies in the world render it utterly Impoſsible ever to know what's Faith, what not, or diſcern Chriſt's true Doctrin from Diabolical Errours. But to return whence we digreſt.

21. It follows from the former diſcourſe, that *thoſe* men who *ſtick* to Tradition, can, by *applying* that their *Rule*, certainly know *who* have *true Faith*, and *which* body of men is the *true Church*; likewiſe, that a *Repreſentative* of that Body is a *true Council*, and that an *Eminent Member* of it *delivering* down to the *next* Age the Doctrine *believ'd* in *his*, whether by expreſly avouching it the Chnrches ſenſe, or confuting Hereticks, is a *true Father*. Laſtly, they can have *Infallible Certainty* both of the *Letter* and *Senſe* of Scripture, as far as concerns *Faith*: For, if any *fault* which ſhocks their Faith, whether of *Tranſlator* or *Tranſcriber*, creep into any paſſage, or, if the *Text* be indeed *right*, but yet *ambiguous*, they can rectifie the *Letter* according to the Law of God written in their hearts, and aſſign it a *ſenſe* agreeable to the *Faith* which they find *there*; between which and that of the Holy Writers, they are *ſure* there can be *no diſagreement*, as being *both* inſpir'd by the *ſame* unerring Light.

22. Con-

22. Contrariwiſe, thoſe that follow *not* this Rule, and ſo are *out* of this Church, of what denomination ſoever, Firſt, can have *no true Faith* themſelves: 'Tis poſſible indeed and uſual that *ſome*, and not ſeldom, *many* of the *Points* to which they aſſent, are True, and the ſame the truly Faithful aſſent to, yet *their* Aſſent to them is not *Faith*; for *Faith* (ſpeaking of *Chriſtian Faith*) is an *Aſſent, which cannot poſſibly be falſe*; and not only the *Points* aſſented to, but the *Aſſent* it ſelf muſt have that diſtance from *Falſhood*, (as is prov'd at large in *Faith vindicated*) elſe 'tis not *Faith*, but degenerates into a *lower* Act, and is call'd *Opinion*: Now the ſtrength of an *Aſſent* rationally made, depends upon the ſtrength of its Grounds; & all Grounds of that Aſſent call'd *Faith*, (I mean ſuch Grounds as tell us *what Chriſt taught*) beſides *Tradition*, are proved (§. 10.) weak and none: *Without* It, therefore, there can be *no true faith*. Next, for want of that only Infallble Ground they cannot have Certainty *which is true Faith*, *who* truly *Faithful*, *which* the true *Church*, *which* a true *Council*, *who* a true *Father*, nor laſtly, *which* is either the *Letter* or *Senſe* of *Scripture* in Dogmatical paſſages that concern Faith. And, ſince they have *no Certainty* of theſe things, they have *no right*, nor ought in a Diſcourſe about *Faith*

be admitted to quote *any of them*; but are Themſelves, and the whole Cauſe concluded in this ſingle Inquiry. *Who have a Compleat*, that is, *an impoſſible to be falſe*, or *Infallible Rule to arrive at Faith.*

23. The ſolid *Satisfaction*, therefore of thoſe who inquire after *true Faith*, is *onely* to be gain'd by examining *who has*, or *who has not* ſuch a *Rule*. This *METHOD* is ſhort and eaſie, and yet alone goes to the Bottom. All *others*, till this be had, are *ſuperficial*, *tedious*, and, for want of Grounds, *Inſignificant*.

The

The Former Diſcourſe Reduc'd to Principles.

TO ſhew the precedent Diſcourſe built on moſt Firm and moſt Evident Principles, and ſuch as I have deſcrib'd in my Preface, I requeſt the Reader to look back with attentive Conſideration upon it's ſeveral parts, and he will diſcern that

§. 1. The Firſt Paragraph is only a Deſcant upon this Propoſition [*The Ground is to be laid before the ſuperſtructures*] or (which comes to the ſame) that [*He who builds muſt build upon ſomething*;] or, to put it in more Immediate Terms [*What's Firſt is to be begun with*] that is [*What's Firſt is to be Firſt*] which is reſolv'd finally into this Propoſition ſupremely Identical [*A thing is to be what it is.*]

§. 2. The Second relies on that famous Maxim of Logicians, that [*The Definition is more known then the Thing defin'd*] which is ſelf-evident ſpeculatively: For the words once underſtood, it comes to this that [*what clears another thing muſt be clearer it ſelf*;]

that [*What explains, muſt explain*] The latter part of it implies, that in plain things depending on Authority [*Honeſt men are to be truſted before Knaves*] which is ſelf-evident practically.

§.3. The third is but an Inference from the two fore-going ones, and manifeſtly depends on the ſame ſelf-evident Principles.

§.4. The Fourth is a farther Deduction; and (ſince to ſatisfy rationally is to make men *know* one way or other) plainly amounts to this [*What's to be known by all muſt be poſſible to be known by all*] which is as ſelf-evident as 'tis that [*That cannot* (or is impoſſible to) *be done, which is Impoſſible to be done.*

§.5. The Fifth is only a ſhort Deſcant upon the fore-going parts of this Diſcourſe, and ſo is reduc't into the ſame Grounds with them.

§.6. The Sixth is as evident as 'tis that [*Men are not to Aſſent upon Authority* (or believe) *if there be no Reaſon for it*] or that [*Rational Agents are to act rationally.*]

§.7. The Seventh ſtates the Queſtion concerning the Right-*Rule of Faith*, and ſhows the way to look after it by vertue of this plain Truth, [*The Meaning of the word ſignifying any nature is the nature ſignify'd by that word:*] or, which is the very ſame [*What's meant by any word is meant by that word.*

§.8. The

§.8. The former part of the 8th is resumed into this cleareſt Truth [*What leaves us in need of a Rule is not a Rule*] or [*A Rule is able to regulate*] which is perfectly equivalent to this [*A Rule is a Rule.*] The Second Part averrs, that *Faith* (taking it for an Aſſent upon the Motives laid by God which cannot leade into Errour) *is not* (it's oppoſit) *Opinion*; which is equivalent to this [*Faith is Faith.*]

§.9. The Ninth only directs our Application of the two preceding Paragraphs to the ſame purpoſe.

§.10. The former part of the Tenth is full as Evident as 'tis that [*Thoſe who are not Scholars* (as the Generality of the Faithfull are not) *cannot be ſatisfy'd rationally in thoſe things which require Scholarſhip*] which, ſince *to be ſatisfy'd rationally* ſignifies *to know*, imports thus much that [*Thoſe who cannot know, cannot know.*] And the ſecond part is as clear as 'tis, that [*That is not the Way which multitudes take & yet go wrong*] which, ſince *a Way* is that which is to carry one *right*, is as palpably ſelf-evident as 'tis that [*A Way is a Way.*]

§.11. The Eleventh which contains the main and in a manner the *only* point, has two parts: One, that Mankind cannot be Ignorant of what they *ſee*, and *hear*, and *do*. For, ſince both Reaſon and Experience tels us,

that

that *Senses* in Men are *Conveyers of Outward Impressions to the Knowing Power*, should Impressions upon those parts not be *conveyed* thither, they would, in that case, *not* be *Sensitive* or *Animals*, and so *no Men*: And did they not *perceive* when such Impressions are convey'd as they ought, they would be destitute of a *Power receiving Knowledge by Senses*, and so again, *no Men*. So that this first part is as evident as 'tis that [*Mankind is Mankind.*] And the *Second* part of this § directly engages this Identical Proposition [*The same is the same with it's self.*] that is, both of them are *self-evident*, or immediatly implying what *is so*.

§.12. The Twelfth has nothing new but what is built on this Manifest Truth [*None can be assur'd without Means to assure*] which, since [*Means*] speaks that by virtue of which as a *necessary requisit* an End is to be compass't, that is, without which it *cannot be* compass't, amounts to this self-evident Truth; [*That cannot be done which cannot be done.*]

§.13. The Thirteenth has for it's *Basis* this undeniable Verity; 'Tis *presumable* that they who *constantly maintain a Tenet* do *hold* the same Tenet and judge it *available to their Cause*, or *for their purpose*, and that they who *write against* it and *vilifie* it do *not hold* it in their hearts, nor judge it to be *avail-*

able

able to their *Cause*. Both which are perfectly the same with this Proposition which Practice makes self-evident. [*Men not Frantick, or in some high Passion will not act directly against their own Interest or to their own overthrow.*] or to this which is self-evident speculatively [*Rational Agents left to their nature will act as they are*, that is, *rationally*. The rest of this § is shown to be *self-evident* in our Discussion of the 11*th*.

§.14. The Fourteenth supposing the Evidence of the 11*th*, 13*th*, and 10*th* is reduc't to this clear Truth [*They act irrationally and unjustifiably who relinquish a Rule Infallibly-Certain upon Uncertain Grounds*] or that [*'Tis better to proceed upon Certainty than Uncertainty.*] which Nature teaches all Mankind.

§.15. The Fifteenth contains these two Truths for it's supporters, both of them self-evident practically. [*That charge is Irrational which is grounded on a Thing unknown to the Accusers, and that Rational which is grounded on matter of Fact notorious to the whole Christian world.*]

§.16. The Sixteenth subsists by vertue of this Evident Truth [*An Universal Change in matters both manifest to sense and most concerning, must needs be Notorious.*] which engages that Principle [*Man is Sensitive or an Animal.*] Whence, this being a direct

part

part of the *Definition* of *Man*, 'tis consequently *Self-evident*.

§.17. The Seventeenth is reduc't to this plain Proposition [*Men of Reason* cannot *hold* and *own* themselves and *propose* to *others* Points most difficult to believe, upon pretence that they came from Christ, and yet yield nor own *any* reason *why* they held they came from Christ] or thus, [*Men either have or* else *yeeld no Reason where there is most need of both:*] which comes to this that [*A pressing Necessity* (which is the *most* violent of *Causes*, & which in our case strains Humane Nature & if it act not, frustrates it of it's end) *has no Effect at all*] which destroys all *Causality*, and consequently all *Science* in the World.

§.18. The Eighteenth is as plain as it is that *Mankind* (amongst which were in all Ages persons of great *Wit* & *Goodness*) *in matters of highest moment and which require the best and surest Ground can continue to hold such things, and yet confess the Ground on which they hold it naught and Insufficient*; or upon second Thoughts going about to settle a better, palpably and directly contradict their own pretence; which is to say [*Where there is most need of reason men do not use it at all*] And, since Effects are not done without *Causes*, (which in our case are *Motives*) and the *greatest Necessity* is the most powerful of

Motives

Motives or Cauſes, if that move them *not* to act rationally *nothing* will do it; and ſo it implies by conſequence the contradictory to this Identical Propoſition [*Rational Agents are capable to act rationally.*]

§.19. The Nineteenth has the ſame *Baſis* with the *16th* and *17th*.

§.20. The *20th* is meerly this Identical Propoſition dilated [*All in any kind are the Univerſality* (or *All*) *in that kind.*

§.21. The Twenty Firſt and Second are Grounded on thoſe Evident Truths [*Thoſe who have Means to arrive at an End can arrive at that End; and thoſe who have not means cannot.*] And, ſince [*Means*] ſpeaks that which makes an End *compaſſable*, they amount to this [*That which can be done can be done, and that which cannot, cannot.*]

§.22. The laſt Paragraph, ſuppoſing the fore-going ones True, is of the ſame ſtrain; and full as evident as it is, that [*None can arrive at an End without what's Neceſſary to arrive at that End*] or that [*That cannot be done which is Impoſſible to be done.*]

Poſtſcript.

HAving thus attempted to *reduce* the main Parts of my *Diſcourſe* concerning the Ground of my Faith to *Firſt Principles*, it is required of Dr. *St.* that in maintaining *his*, he would not decline the *ſame* Teſt: This if he thinks it ſafe to undertake, it will *quickly* and *evidently* appear on whoſe ſide *Truth* ſtands. And this is manifeſtly his Task who pretends to *Principles*. For he muſt either vouch thoſe he produces to be *Firſt* Principles, or *reducible* to the *Firſt*, elſe he muſt confeſs them to be *none at all*.

I have little hopes he will think it fit to expoſe his Diſcourſes to this Noon-day-Evidence; nor indeed will the *Genius* of *Errour* endure ſuch a Triall as the going about to connect it with *Firſt* and *Self-evident* Truths: for what Communication can that *Darkneſs* have with this *Cleareſt Light*? and I conceive it was Clearneſs of *Style*, that is, a *Grammatical* or *Rhetorical* Clearneſs, and not a *Logical* or *Rational* one, (which conſiſts in reſolving his Diſcourſe into Firſt Principles,) that Dr. *Tillotſon* boaſtingly attributed to him in his *Sermon-Preface*; for himſelf (as is evident by his whole way of writing) never dream't of any other. 'Tis more

more to Dr, *St*'s purpoſe (which is to keep things from being underſtood) to avoid by all means this diſcovering Method and all arguing from the nature of the Thing (whence he foreſees no ſmall danger of too great Evidence is likely to ſpring) and to leade his Reader into a Wilderneſs of Words (whole Libraries of Authors) where, by his way of managing Citations, which is by Criticiſing, upon ambiguous words and phraſes, they may dance in the Maze till they be weary. I hear he is about this ſtratagem; and that he ayms, out of ſome high Expreſſions of the Fathers concerning the Excellency and Self-ſufficiency of the Scriptures to prove the *Uſeleſneſs* of the Church to aſcertain Faith. But, alas! how he will be defeated? Not one Teſtimony of any Authority will be found which comes home to his purpoſe, or proves that private men need not the Churches Interpretation ere they can ſecurely build their *Faith* on it?

To ſave him therefore the labour of collecting and Printing multitudes of theſe to no purpoſe; and his Readers from the fruitleſs toil of troubling themſelves with Impertinences, I produce him *one* out of *Vincentius Lirinenſis* worth thouſands; for it ſpeaks with as high Reverence of Scripture, and of it's *Fulneſs*, *Perfection*, and *Self-ſufficiency* as *any*, perhaps more; and ſo he can-

not with any reason except against it; and being intended purposely to speak to *this* Point must needs be the most apposit decider of the Question that can be; not to add the Acceptation and Esteem that Excellent Treatise of his ever had from the Church, which argues it's perfect Conformity to the Churches Sense in setling and stating the Right Rule of Faith.

I transcribe then from this Ancient and Learned Father his whole Second Chapter (in his Treatise Entitled *Against the profane Innovations of Heresy*) which is this.

Hic forsitan requirat aliquis, &c. *Here perhaps some may ask, since the Canon of the Scriptures is perfect, and enough nay more than enough suffices to it self for all things, what need is there that the Authority of the Churches Sense should be joyn'd to it? Because all men do not take the Holy Scripture, by reason of its depth, in one and the same meaning, but divers men interpret it's sayings diversly, so that as many Opinions in a manner as there are men seem possible to be drawn thence. For* Novatian *expounds it one way*, Photinus *another*, Sabellius *another, and* Donatus *another*; Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, *take it in one sense*; Apollinaris, Priscillianus *in another sense*: Jovinian, Pelagius, Cœlestius *understand it thus; and lastly*, Nestorius *otherwise. And therefore it is very necessary by reason of so great windings*

windings of ſo various Error that the Line *of the Prophetical and Apoſtolical Interpretation may be directed according to the* Rule *of the Eccleſiaſtical and Catholick Senſe.*

From which place we may Note,

1. That though he allows the Canon of Scripture *perfect and ſufficient for all things*, yet by ſhowing it Interpretable divers ways, and this by Great and Learned men, and ſo that they fall into multitudes of Errors by thoſe Inerpretations, and thence requiring the Authority of the Churches Senſe as neceſſary to underſtand it right ſo as to build Faith on it, he plainly ſhows, that Scripture *alone* is not *ſufficient* for *this* End, ſince it *needs another* to atchieve it. And hence it is not ſaid ſimply [*it ſuffices for all things*] but [*Sufficit ſibi ad omnia, It is ſufficient to it ſelf for all things*] which can only mean that it has all the Perfection due to it's own nature (as I ſhew'd above, *p.* 87, 88, 89.) or is ſufficient for the ends God intended it for, reckon'd up by S. *Paul* to *Timothy*, amongſt which no ſuch thing is found as, *Sufficiency of Clearneſs to every ſober Enquirer, ſo as to build his Faith on his private Interpretation of it, without the direction of the Churches Senſe*; only which will come to Dr. *St's* purpoſe. Since then I allow Scripture all Sufficiency and Perfection but this of being ſufficiently clear to private Underſtandings ſo as to build their Faith on

their

their own Interpretations of it, I allow it all this Learned Father or the Ancient Church ever did.

2. 'Tis obſervable that he puts not the fault in the *Perſons*, but gives for the reaſon of their miſunderſtanding it, *the depth or deep ſenſe of the Scriptures*: which argues that though ſome few out of wickedneſs wilfully miſtake, yet the General reaſon of the miſcarriage is *the diſproportion of the Scripture to private Underſtandings in Dogmatical* Points of Chriſtianity, as I conſtantly maintain.

3. He cals the Interpretation of it [*a Line*;] which is *Flexible and Dirigible*; and the *ſenſe of the Catholick Church the* Rule; which lies *firm*, as apt to *direct another*; and ſo with me he makes the *ſenſe of the Catholick Church* the *only Rule of Faith*.

4. This Senſe of the Church is intimated to be Antecedent to *all* Interpretation of Scripture, and therefore the Church muſt have had this *Senſe* or *Knowledge* of Faith by *Tradition*; there being no other way becoming Gods Ordinary Providence but theſe two.

5. Theſe things being ſo, 'tis moſt Evident that when in the former Chapter he mentions the *Authority of the Divine Law* (meaning the *Scripture*) and the *Tradition of the Catholick Church*, he meant them *jointly*, as appears expreſly by the very next words

words beginning this preſent Chapter; nor did he ſpeak *there* of the means of *bringing* men *to* Faith, as the *Rule of Faith* ought to do, but of *keeping* them *in* Faith or preſerving them from ſliding into Hereſie; and ſince he attributes in this Chapter, *Convictiveneſs* of what's Faith only to the *Churches Senſe*; 'tis manifeſt all that remains to be attributed to Scripture is *Agreeableneſs* of it's Letter (if a good Paſtor expound it) to the preſent Faith of the Church; to ſee which, exceedingly *comforts* Faith in the hearts of the already-Faithful, who muſt needs have a high Reverence for the Holy Scriptures Authority.

The whole ſtrain then of my Diſcourſes here againſt Dr. *St.* concerning the *Rule of Faith* is perfectly conſonant to this Learned Father of the Church and to all Antiquity. Only our frequent and cloſe Conteſts with our acute Modern Diſſenters have obliged us to a more Scholar-like way of diſtinguiſhing our Notions exactly which the Ancients did not, and (Faith being *contain'd* in *two* things, the *Scriptures* and the *Breaſt of the Church*) of determining which of them is the Proper *Aſcertainer of Faith* to all the *Faithful* and thoſe which are to be *converted*; and ſo in true and exact Speech *the Rule of Faith*; and both this Father and Evident Reaſon give it to be the Church.

What then Dr. *St.* is to do in this Point, if he

he makes any ſuch Attempt, is to alledge Convincing Teſtimonies that the Ancient Fathers held *Scripture ſo plain to every Sober Enquirer as to give him ſuch Certainty that he may ſafely build his Faith on his own Interpretation thereof, without needing the Churches*; when he produces ſuch Teſtimonies as come home to this or an Equivalent ſenſe he will work *wonders*; and, unleſs he does this, he does juſt *nothing*. But I foreſee two unlucky *difficulties*; one, that he will not find *one* Teſtimony of *any* Authority which *excludes* the Church from this Office, as himſelf *directly* does; next, that could he produce thouſands, he would ſpoil them all at the next word, and render them Inconcluſive, that is, Inſignificant, with telling us very ſoberly they are all *Fallible* as to that effect; and conſequently were perhaps in an Error in all they ſay.

FINIS.